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A Ministry Initiative for Corporate Spiritual Formation at Lighthouse Church Through Meditative Prayer, Encouragement, and Leadership

Daeyul Daniel Chung

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

CORPORATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT LIFELIGHT CHURCH THROUGH
MEDITATIVE PRAYER, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

Written by

DAEYUL DANIEL CHUNG

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



Keith J. Matthews



Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: September 4, 2018

CORPORATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT LIFELIGHT CHURCH THROUGH
MEDITATIVE PRAYER, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

DAEYUL DANIEL CHUNG
AUGUST 2018

ABSTRACT

Growing Together in Christ: A Ministry Initiative for Corporate Spiritual Formation at Lighthouse Church Through Meditative Prayer, Encouragement, and Leadership

Daeyul Daniel Chung

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2018

The purpose of this project is to develop a ministry initiative for corporate spiritual formation at Lighthouse Church in San Francisco to encourage intentional spiritual growth of the community. Most critical to this project is to recognize the social element of spiritual formation. It imagines all members of the church practicing the presence of God to be formed to the likeness of Christ through meditative prayer, encouragement, and leadership as formative practices within the community.

This paper is divided into three parts. Part One examines current socio-economic and cultural shifts in San Francisco and its effects on Lighthouse Church. Specifically, the unique landscape of the city's lack of religiosity and the characteristic of millennials in Lighthouse Church are explored in order to decipher a contextual basis for the need for spirituality.

Part Two of this paper engages a relevant biblical and theological foundation for corporate spiritual formation by reviewing literature that provides the rationale for prayer, encouragement, and leadership as formative, communal practices within the process of individual growth. A survey of the *missio Dei* throughout the Pauline letters is explored for its significant relevance to spiritual formation. The section also examines faith as a journey, observable in Israel's story of exodus and the characters in the Old Testament.

Part Three presents the goals and plans for implementing the corporate practice of meditative prayer, encouragement, and leadership for the formation of members of Lighthouse Church. This section includes a detailed strategy for teaching about spiritual formation as a process, practicing meditative prayer, learning about peer coaching, and discovering fivefold gifting. Finally, the implementation and assessment of the project are outlined in its process, resources, and assessment.

Content Reader: Keith J. Matthews, PhD

Words: 276

To my beautiful wife Esther and my beloved mother

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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

It is often said that assumption is the mother of all mistakes.¹ This statement could not be more fitting to the issue of spiritual growth in the church today. Regular attendance on Sundays often assumes growth in faith. Everyone serving on the church board is assumed to have mature faith, above reproach conduct, and unquestionable devotion. If a couple seems always happy and their kids behave well on Sundays, people assume that they have a wonderful marriage and are a godly family.

Assumptions like these are fostered by the way the church arranges the spiritual growth of the congregation. People become members simply by completing the membership class. Baptism is a ritualistic program that merely promotes an attendee to a member. Growth in spirit is seemingly achieved upon merits earned from certain discipleship programs. Leadership roles are placed on those with seniority, desirable outer appearance, specific gifts (teacher, pastor), and social/financial status. Such prevailing measures to attain and bargain spiritual growth is the current phenomenon across the church in North America. Consequently, many Christians are likely in a delusion, thinking they are mature when in fact they are mere “infants” incapable of solid food (1 Cor 3:2).² Many are ignorant and indifferent about their spiritual growth as long as they get their fill of spiritual craving on Sunday morning and maintain respectful appearances. Spiritual growth of Christians in North America for the past few centuries in

¹ Eugene Lewis Fordsworthe is responsible for this statement. A specific source is unknown.

² All Scripture quoted is from the New Revised Standard Version unless noted otherwise.

the waning of Christendom has been mistaken by activities, positions and social status, and defined by performance and knowledge rather than relational, missional practices.

Richard Foster was influential in calling the church back to spiritual formation through the introduction of *Celebration of Discipline* in 1978. In it, Foster emphasizes the importance of spiritual disciplines to help Christians grow to maturity, dividing twelve disciplines into three categories of “inward,” “outward,” and “corporate.” Foster’s ground-breaking work alarmed many Christians and steered the church toward seeking spiritual disciplines that transformed people from the inside out. While literature like *Celebration of Discipline* helped to awaken the evangelical church to spiritual formation, Foster and others have remained in the path of individualism within the narrative of modernity and persisted in distancing people from seeking growth as a community. While many scholars including Foster imply the presence of community for the formation of a person, the subject of exercises they suggest is consistently an individual rather than a community.³ As a result, there is a shortage of resources for corporate formation that embodies the call of the church to build up the body of Christ for all believers to “come to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Eugene Peterson is adamant in protesting against this skewed focus in the church toward “birth of believers and neglect of their growth” as he argues how the metaphor of growth is “distorted out of its origin in biology and emasculated into an abstract and soulless item of arithmetic” as in “church growth” or “growing churches.”⁴ Many

³ As this argument is outside the scope of this project, I would like to mention that my accusation is directed to authors of classical spiritual formation such as Foster and Finley.

⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), Kindle: 73.

churches have yet to move away from a Christendom mindset that assumes individual salvation of their attendees; they define church growth by its size and influence. The church has been widely missing its purpose to be first and foremost about the growth of its people toward a spiritual, and essentially a relational, maturity. While God has graciously worked through this deficiency of the church to still raised mature, faithful witnesses, the prevalent structure and understanding of church continue to hinder God's people from realizing, and properly practicing, spiritual formation as a community.

Fortunately, there have been movements that call the church back to the *missio Dei*, mission of God, that necessitates formational growth of the people. However, missional formation, as some call it, is not simply the idea that participating in the *missio Dei* plays a role in Christian formation, but rather it is about the discovery of spiritual formation as a missional and communal endeavor. In other words, the mission of God not only anticipates the formation of his people but also dislocates spiritual formation from individualism that focuses solely on achieving one's nearness of God and demands a purposeful formation that is impossible outside corporate practices. Therefore, not only should spiritual formation be realized and rediscovered away from aforementioned assumptions, programs, and systemic accreditation but also it must be centered in and out of community, moving beyond personal faith and internal growth, and toward intentional, relational growth that exhibits obedience to the Spirit in the way Christians love and submit to one another and build each other up. Within Lighthouse Church of the Nazarene ("Lighthouse," hereafter), while there has been a satisfying outcome of young people coming to faith, the church is presently faced with the challenge of stagnant spiritual growth, tension among the members, and idleness. In other words, assumptions,

individualism, and prevalent cultural dynamics have created spiritual ignorance, a lack of love among members, and little intention to grow for the sake of God's mission.

Consequently, the purpose of this doctoral project is to develop a ministry initiative for Lifelight that allows intentional spiritual growth that is corporately practiced through meditative prayer, encouragement, and leadership based on fivefold gifting.

There is a deep spiritual hunger inside and outside the church today.

Postmodernism has made people distrustful of any narrative or science, bewildered in a life without answers or certainty. People want to meet God but are disinterested and suspicious of religion and dissatisfied with religious answers.⁵ Many so-called "Nones," those without any religious affiliation, consider themselves spiritual, or at least open to spirituality while they reject any specific religion.⁶ As a result of the growing popularity of spirituality and the church's lack of engagement, the society has fostered preconceived spiritual activities that are far from Christian spirituality that recognizes the Creator God and his desire for the people. Outside the church, one often mixes spirituality from various religions like a personalized music track in accordance with the prevailing attitude that all spirituality goes together, peace is what one makes it to be, and God is reachable in many ways. Conversely, spirituality is becoming increasingly subversive to the culture that is fast-paced, materialistic, narcissistic, and full of distractions. Robert Mulholland argues that spiritual formation is against "a privatized and individualized religion and the deep-seated belief that spiritual life is a matter between the individual

⁵ Ibid., 172-173.

⁶ More on the spirituality of "nones" is written in chapter 1.

and God.”⁷ In the self-help culture, spiritual formation is often defined by collecting information and techniques rather than submitting to the Spirit to transform us to the likeness of Christ. Not only has the church deviated from its path, but also the prevailing postmodernism and secularized practice of spirituality has outlandishly misconstrued spiritual formation in the society.

Lifelight has not been an exception to this. While the community has been faithfully devoted to studying the Word through exegetical study and expository preaching and reaching non-believers, it has overlooked participation in spiritual formation and intentional growth as a community. As a result, the community lacks spiritual sensitivity. Also, while the members appear to get along with one another, there is an unmistakable, subtle distance between them. While such distance may be due to cultural differences and socio-economic tension within the changing dynamic in San Francisco, it implies that there is a deficiency of the substance, namely the Gospel, which brings the members together as Christ’s body and, as Bonhoeffer calls, “a source of incomparable joy and strength” for one another.⁸ This deficiency is the most apparent evidence of the need for corporate formation since spiritual maturity is most visible in the way God’s people love one another and are one in the Spirit.

The problem, however, lies not only in the lack of spiritual formation but in a deeply embedded structure of leadership that is given to a single person – the clergy. The clergy model, a product of Christendom, wrecks the priesthood of all believers (1 Pt 2:9)

⁷ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Kindle: 80-81.

⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Vol. 5* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), Kindle: 29.

that enables cohesive growth of individuals within the community to lead in fivefold gifting (Eph 4:11), manifest spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:8-10; Rom 12:6-8), and embody the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a). As a result, the congregation is utterly dependent on clergy, uninspired, and neglectful of spiritual growth. Peterson concurs that the clergy model has given rise to the professionalism of faith in which people seek professionals for issues of their faith.⁹ This effect is evident in the congregation's attitude toward spiritual growth and their lack of responsibility for the unity of the church. In addition, the polity of the denomination which dictates leadership and organization of its local congregation hinders the development and re-contextualization for communal growth. Consequently, lay leadership roles in church is generally refused because the current system of hierarchical authority is unattractive and viewed purely as labor rather than an opportunity for growth in obedience. The most devastating effect is that the current system is set up for, and limited to, maintenance that organizes the church for efficiency rather than for responding to God's call to be transformed for his mission. If spiritual formation is not an end in itself but a means to grow "healthy in God, robust in love" (Eph 4:15, The Message) for the *missio Dei*, it must integrate corporate practices to deepen the faith, enrich relationships, and embrace vocational callings within the community. It is my hope that this paper will serve to launch and ignite spiritual sensitivity for Lifelight and inspire the community to formational practices.

To do so, it will be important first to understand the essence of spiritual formation of which Christ's resurrected presence is practiced within the faith community and in

⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Living the Resurrection: The Risen Christ in Everyday Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), Kindle: 113.

daily life. This involves intentional recognition of God’s presence during worship, fellowship, and every gathering of the community. Lifelight will learn that faith is a journey in which growth is identifiable and is practiced first within the faith community. This will encourage Lifelight toward an intentional practice of corporate formation during the gathered meeting and scattered interaction between the members. As a Nazarene church, Lifelight will reclaim the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical, sacramental and experiential spirituality, continuing to use the Bible as the primary source for theology and a life of prayer.¹⁰ In addition to meditative prayer, this project will foster two other corporate formational practices: encouragement by a method of peer coaching as a community-wide, coordinated effort to sustain intentional growth, and fivefold gifting as a formative practice for leadership to equip one another (Eph 4:11).¹¹

To achieve this, teaching sessions will be set aside for learning. The annual community retreat will introduce meditative prayer and integrate it into weekly gatherings. The practice of encouragement will be initiated with a select few and then implemented church-wide. The congregation will engage in various assessments to help recognize one’s faith journey, virtues, inclinations (personality types) and spiritual gifts. Finally, the community will celebrate and affirm each other’s gift for building up the body of Christ. In addition to the content, this paper will provide resources to help map the stages of Christian journey in conjunction with different types of prayer, examples of meditative prayer, a guideline for coaching, and a description of fivefold gifting. A record

¹⁰ Robin Maas and Gabriel O’Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Abingdon Press, 1990), Kindle: 6280.

¹¹ The term “peer coaching” is taken from *Terry B. Walling, Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Leadership Development Series Book 1) (Leader Breakthru, 2014), Kindle: 1508-1509.

of tabulated participation, surveys and feedback will reveal the receptivity and initial effectiveness of the project.

This project is organized into five chapters to introduce the ministry initiative for corporate spiritual formation and the theology that informs it. Chapter 1 in Part One examines San Francisco and its current socio-economic changes and challenges and assesses how Lifelight presently navigates its context. In Part Two, chapter 2 introduces the primary literary resources referenced in constructing the theological foundation discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 in Part Three builds on the theology described in Part Two and outlines goals and the content in introducing and practicing corporate formation for Lifelight. Chapter 5 presents the implementation and a process for evaluation of the project. The project concludes with a summary of outcomes, insights gained, and plans for the future.

CHAPTER 1

THE COMMUNITY AND CONGREGATIONAL CONTEXT

This chapter is divided into two sections and introduces Lifelight and its local context, the city of San Francisco. The first section describes the current dynamic of San Francisco including its socio-economic challenges and post-Christendom context. Section two provides a brief history of Lifelight and its current practices and structure and explores the corresponding characteristics of millennials in the church. This chapter aims to offer a contextual understanding of socio-economic setting and postmodern culture, specifically that of millennials, affecting the members of Lifelight and sets the stage to address the need for intentional, corporate spiritual formation.

The Ever-Changing City

San Francisco is a small city, located at the tip of a peninsula in Northern California, that grew quickly during the 1840s Gold Rush. It is one of the most famous cities in the world, known for its unique, diverse, and artistic communities of alternative culture and legendary social movements that influenced the nation. Most people associate the city with its iconic districts like the Italian neighborhood of North Beach, the vibrant

Hispanic culture of Mission, the hippy hill of Haight-Ashbury, the eminent first Chinatown in America, and the Castro, the capital of gay rights movement. According to the 2010 Census, within its 46.9 square miles, San Francisco had a population of 805,000, comprised of 48.5 percent Whites, 33 percent Asians, 15.1 percent Non-White Hispanics or Latinos, and 6.1 percent African Americans.¹ The city also has the lowest percentage (13 percent) of children (eighteen and under) compared to other major metropolitan cities in the country (24 percent, on average) and the most college graduates (54 percent). Additionally, nearly half (44 percent) of its people speak languages other than English at home.² The City by the Bay and its surrounding cities is home to new economy of high-tech companies including Apple, Airbnb, Facebook, Google, Twitter, Uber, and Tesla. The city is thriving with an unemployment rate of just 3 percent and leads the nation in job growth.³ Most notably, San Francisco is the epicenter of technological innovation with the emerging array of start-ups and is considered one of the best cities in America in terms of upward mobility.⁴ Consequently, this has caused an influx of tech

¹ U. S. Census Bureau, "State and County QuickFacts: San Francisco, CA," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sanfranciscocitycalifornia,US/PST045216>; Census Reporter, "San Francisco, CA," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0667000-san-francisco-ca/>.

² Citylab, "Where Kids Live Now in the US," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2015/04/where-kids-live-now-in-the-us/390243/>; U. S. Census: QuickFacts, "Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2011-2015, San Francisco, CA," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/sanfranciscocountycalifornia/EDU685215#viewtop>. This is compared with The New York Times, "Cities with the Most College-Educated Residents," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/31/us/education-in-metro-areas.html?mcubz=1>.

³ *Los Angeles Times*, "California jobless rate dips to 5% as state adds 22,900 jobs in February," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-california-jobs-march-20170324-story.html> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "San Francisco Area Economic Summary," accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/summary/blssummary_sanfrancisco.pdf.

⁴ The Guardian, "Is San Francisco Losing Its Soul?" accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/is-san-francisco-losing-its-soul>. According to Zoë Corbyn,

workers that is radically changing the demographics of the city; the people moving in tend to be more educated, younger, and mostly White and Asian, while the people moving out are less educated, older, and African American and Hispanic.⁵ As San Francisco becomes younger, more educated, and more affluent, it is also quickly losing its diversity.

While cities' demographics are always changing, San Francisco's recent transformation is uniquely extreme and damaging. Alexandra Pelosi's recent documentary on HBO titled *San Francisco 2.0* showcased the displacement and segregation caused by the migration of young tech professionals that have been pricing out the working class and lower income families in San Francisco.⁶ The median monthly rent which began to soar in 2011 is already the highest in the country and is still increasing at a rate three times the national average.⁷ The opportunity to benefit from the increasing real estate has many landlords displacing longtime residents (36 percent owner occupied housing) by flipping rent-controlled apartment buildings into flats to sell.⁸ Evicted residents are having to move away, unable to afford to live in the city anymore.

AngelList, a networking site for investors, listed 5,249 tech startups in San Francisco in 2014, each worth \$4.6 million in average and offering an average salary of \$105,000.

⁵ Priceonomics, "Quantifying the Changing Face of San Francisco," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://priceonomics.com/quantifying-the-changing-face-of-san-francisco/>. Dan Kopf's report is an annual estimate of the net migration of people 22 to 49 according to American Community Survey, 2010-2014.

⁶ Daily Beast, "San Francisco's Alarming Tech Bro Boom: What Is the Price of Change?" accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/san-franciscos-alarming-tech-bro-boom-what-is-the-price-of-change>.

⁷ Rent Jungle, "Rent trend data in San Francisco, California," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.rentjungle.com/average-rent-in-san-francisco-rent-trends/>.

⁸ City and County of San Francisco, Rent Board, "Annual Eviction Report," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://sfrb.org/annual-eviction-reports>. Official figures from the San Francisco Rent Board estimate

Areas which were predominantly lower income, working class, and distinctively identifiable by their cultures are being gentrified. Consequently, communities of alternative culture like the North Beach and the Mission are turning into playgrounds for the rich. Many longtime businesses, art galleries, and non-profits are also closing or relocating because they cannot afford the increased rent. Sadly, some churches with buildings are also cashing in by raising their rent and thus squeezing out smaller congregations. Churches without facilities are having to compete for increasingly limited, affordable venues to meet for worship. Lack of space has always been a challenge for Lifelight and has often dictated its activities. There are very few people in the congregation who own or rent an entire home and live without relatives or housemates to open up their homes for fellowship. The community has on many occasions endured fellowship in a room, backyard, and even in a closet.

Alongside displacement and gentrification, the socio-economic landscape of the city has also been changing since the upper class is on the rise while the middle class is shrinking. The city's median household income is now the highest in the country.⁹ While the cost of living rises, those with an unchanging income are being reclassified toward the lower class.¹⁰ Anxiety over the economy and financial struggle is shared in prayer

no-fault evictions to have displaced 1,400 renters in 2013: an increase of 17% from 2010.

⁹ Department of Numbers, "San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont California Household Income," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.deptofnumbers.com/income/california/san-francisco/>; U.S. Census, "New American Community Survey Statistics for Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Available for States and Local Areas," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/acs-single-year.html?intcmp=s1-acs>.

¹⁰ SmartAsset, "What is the True Cost of Living in San Francisco?" accessed April 15, 2017, <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/what-is-the-cost-of-living-in-san-francisco>. The income gap between incoming and outgoing migrants jumped from around \$1,000 in 2005-2007 to an estimate of \$4,000 from 2010-2014.

requests and conversations in Lifelight with some members often absent from meetings due to additional jobs or increased hours of work to make a living. Pelosi describes what is happening in San Francisco as emblematic of a changing America and an emerging challenge of the new American economic reality.¹¹

Subsequently, the change is causing tension between longtime residents and techies: the new, young tech workers, and many people worry about how the city is changing for the worse. In 2013, neighborhood marches and blockades against tech giants' luxury, commuter buses captured the attention of the nation.¹² Most recently, a video on YouTube of a confrontation between a group of Hispanic teens and a group of tech employees over a soccer field in the Mission went viral. The kids were told to leave the field in which they had played pickup ball their entire lives because the techies had reserved the field through a new app.¹³ The tension in the video is an epitome of what has been happening in San Francisco. Such tension is also active within Lifelight as the community is made up mostly of longtime residents and locals but also a mix of those in the lower, working classes from the Mission, the Tenderloin, and Bayview-Hunters Point, as well as young middle-class professionals who entered into the tech industry themselves. There is consistently at least one family involved in either displacement or relocation. Some of Hispanic members are actively engaged in the protest against

¹¹ Daily Beast.

¹² The Guardian. An estimate of 35,000 employees of companies like Facebook, Google and Apple commute each day in luxury buses equipped with Wi-Fi according to San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Authority.

¹³ YouTube, "Mission Playground is Not For Sale," accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awPVY1DcupE>.

gentrification in the Mission district. While the tension and struggle are prevalent, there is also an excitement about how the new paradigm infused by a start-up culture may transform the society and encourage people to seek greater emphasis and desire for communal life. I believe this new start-up culture and the thirst for authentic community parallels the movement for the church to plant missional communities. This is, in fact, the culture of Lifelight: to plant and multiply missional communities.

San Francisco has not, however, had a positive relationship with Christianity in its recent history. The city has been for decades the front runner for tolerance, liberalism, and religious disputes. While the remnants of old cathedrals, mission settlements, and temples remain throughout the city, religiosity is nearly non-existent in the lives of its people. According to findings by The Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life which identifies a widespread concern over the rise of the Nones across North America, one in five Americans (19.3 percent) claim no religious identity.¹⁴ In comparison, figures assembled by The Association of Religion Data Archives report that 64.7 percent of San Franciscans do not claim any religious affiliation, and only 4 percent claim to be affiliated with evangelical Protestant churches.¹⁵ James White is helpful in providing the general identity of the Nones as male (56 percent), young (33 percent of those under thirty), white (71 percent), and Democrat who support LGBTQ rights, same-sex marriage,

¹⁴ Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life, “Nones on the Rise,” accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>.

¹⁵ City-Data.com, “San Francisco County, CA, Religion Statistics Profile,” accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/county/religion/San-Francisco-County-CA.html>; The Association of Religious Archives, “San Francisco County, CA, Religious Traditions 2010,” accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/06/rcms2010_06075_county_name_2010.asp.

and abortion.¹⁶ White's findings not only coincide with the demographics of San Francisco but also support the data found by The Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study in which 71 percent of San Franciscans are for abortion, 80 percent for LGBTQ rights, 72 percent for same-sex marriage, and 65 percent are Democrats.¹⁷ In other words, San Francisco is the epitome of the rising Nones. White laments that one of the more disconcerting marks of typical Nones is that "they are not thinking about religion and rejecting it; they are not thinking about it at all."¹⁸ Sadly, this is the correct description of the people in San Francisco for whom religion is simply a non-issue. Most members of Lifelight who grew up in the city has never been in a church nor heard the Gospel. There is not a hint of Christianity in the lives of most people in the city outside the holidays and the curse words.

On the other hand, the same data by The Pew Research Center reports that the Nones are not necessarily atheists as 68 percent say they believe in a god or a universal spirit, 51 percent frequently pray, 44 percent meditate, and 67 percent feel spiritual peace.¹⁹ At the same time, their "source of guidance on right and wrong" is not religion (18 percent) but common sense (46 percent), reason (19 percent), and science (13 percent).²⁰ Their "belief in absolute standards for right and wrong" depends on situations

¹⁶ James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 21-22.

¹⁷ Pew Research Center, "Adults in the San Francisco metro area," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/san-francisco-metro-area/>.

¹⁸ White, *Nones*, 27, quoting Barry Kosmin.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, "Adults in the San Francisco metro area."

²⁰ Ibid.

(70 percent) rather than clear standards (26 percent).²¹ Despite the fact that the city rejects religion and is reticent toward any labels, there is an openness for and tolerance of non-religious, alternative, spiritual practices for San Franciscans.²² While the Nones are either actively spiritual or desiring spirituality, theirs is a vacant and highly individualistic spirituality - an example of spirituality in postmodernism. As a consequence to such dynamics of the city, the landscape of evangelical churches in the city is a mix of hip Christendom churches serving newly arrived transients from the South and the Midwest, locals enclosed in a Christendom bubble, and others on the cutting-edge like Lifelight, planting post-Christendom faith communities with missional identity, purpose and practice.

The Ever-Changing Church

Lifelight began in 2007 as a community of young people who had just started to follow Jesus through the ministry of Young Life which is a parachurch organization focused on youth outreach. The community was then joined by a group of adults who envisioned a church with a mission to reach the young people in San Francisco. Lifelight then became two communities meeting separately in homes. Today, Lifelight is a family of three faith communities, having added another in San Jose. Lifelight is also in the process of planting three more communities in the Bay Area, one of which will be a community of young families in San Francisco. The church has five pastors, all of whom are bi-vocational, and only two pastors receive financial support from the church. As a

²¹ Ibid.

²² White, *Nones*, 23.

local congregation of the Church of the Nazarene, the members identify with the Wesleyan theology and tradition, and have a fair understanding of its history and values. Lifelight also participate in multiple events and meetings with other Nazarene churches in the district, sharing resources and facilities. I have had the privilege of being part of Lifelight's story since the very beginning. While there are multiple communities within Lifelight, this project will focus on and refer to the community with mostly young people in their 20s in San Francisco.

During its first few years, Lifelight struggled to realize its identity as a faith community in San Francisco. The church met in a home, then in a church facility, then in a public building, and then back in a home. Young people came and went through the community like going through a revolving door. Lifelight has been the first church for many members who had just begun their journey of faith. Most of them ended up leaving the church either for college, career, or another church. The church spent the first several years laboriously reaching and nurturing young people but having little stability as the number of members fluctuated drastically, and their spiritual maturity remained as infants. In recent years, Lifelight has found some stability as the majority of members are now in their mid-twenties, most of whom came to faith through the ministry of the church and have settled in the city with exciting careers and recent marriages. Currently, 60 percent of the community are baptized believers. 50 percent have come to faith in the last five years. The rest of the community (40 percent) are not-yet believers, though at least half of these are committed, sincere seekers participating in the community life. While most members have grown up in the city, they are diverse in education, socio-economic class, and ethnic heritage, mostly second and third generation Asian and Latino.

Lifelight may be categorized as many different types of church by its structure and style: house church, slow church, organic church, or emerging church. However, the community has learned to recognize and embrace its identity first and foremost as a missional church, called to reach young people in the challenging postmodern, post-Christendom context of San Francisco. In living toward that calling, its practices are few and simple. There are two corporate meetings each week: Sunday service and midweek Bible study. An annual retreat, a baptismal celebration, and seasonal gatherings (Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) are only other events. The intention is to minimize community life, making it less busy, so to unleash members to go out, engage their network of people, live incarnationally, and retreat to the community for encouragement and rest. Lifelight has always been determined to keep its main focus on loving God and loving people with a simple slogan: a community learning to live and love like Jesus.

While the Sunday service at Lifelight is simple and casual with acoustic music and a printed program, it requires substantial participation from the attendees to read the lectionary passages, recite ancient prayers, and pray intercessory prayers. The Lord's table is celebrated every Sunday. Midweek Bible study is an in-depth study that goes through one book of the Bible at a time. Learning the Word has always been the basis of community life at Lifelight. I can confidently say that members who have been part of the church for some time know how to study the Bible, pray in public, and reach out to non-believers. Annual retreats have been a highlight throughout the years for many members who as a young, urban crowd rarely have a chance to get away from the city to focus and grow in Christ. Baptism is the most anticipated festival as the church baptizes new believers at Ocean Beach, publicly declaring their faith and celebrating in the

presence of the faith community, family, friends, and often curious onlookers. Despite few meetings and events, the core value of the church has demanded a high commitment from all members in attendance, giving, and serving. Such firm, high expectations have been installed in order to counter the noncommittal and individualistic stance that is prevalent in the evangelical church today. Adversely, such expectations have incurred high pressure for the members and seekers. Yet, the community has persisted and prided itself on admitting that Lifelight may not be a church for everyone, especially those coming from another church. In fact, some members have started to describe Lifelight to others as a boot camp for new believers.

While Lifelight is structurally an organic, house church network, it is still primarily a Christendom church, having been led by a single, lead pastor (the author) with hierarchical authority, and governed by a church board according to the denominational manual and polity. The church board corresponds to the Nazarene manual in its function, authority, and membership. Financial and organizational decisions are made by the church board while ministerial decisions are made in meetings with the leaders appointed by the pastor. Most communication is done privately or in a small group setting, and never involves the whole community. In general, the lead pastor appoints all leaders, manages all conflicts, and makes most decisions. A dominant presumption that has prevailed this system is that the community is full of new and young believers who cannot relate to typical church organization or programs and who lack the traditional leadership skills and experience to prepare them for leadership positions. In addition, the young people in the city are too busy trying to meet the high cost of living, stressed over uncertain futures, and have little time between family issues and work.

Another presumption is that the conventional way of developing leaders by offering small groups and seminars is unfeasible for a house church like Lifelight. While these are valid challenges for leadership development, the current process of decision-making and leadership structure nonetheless prevents anyone from sharing a voice, exercising one's spiritual gifts, and embracing opportunities to grow in faith. The measuring stick for personal growth in the community has been commitment and participation as opposed to internal formation displayed in love and humility. It is possible that the high demand and focus toward the value of activity and knowledge are the cause of the ongoing issue of spiritual ignorance and the lack of unity.

The current practice and structure of Lifelight are especially challenging and limiting for millennials to engage and grow. Lifelight is made up of mostly millennials although they are raised by immigrant parents, mostly Asian and Latino. Nevertheless, they portray typical characteristic traits of millennials in addition to their ethnic heritage, as a result of cultural engraining by the internet and social media. Over the years, I have realized that their spirituality is selfish, shallow, compartmentalized, and individualistic. They think they are spiritual and mature, but internally they are still children, lacking the maturity to form and nurture deep relationships and carry on a real conversation.²³ Perhaps the most frustrating characteristic of millennials is the lack of transparency. They are challenging to figure out and engage with on deeper levels past their defensive layers. They are hurt, but they choose to distance themselves from their hurt. These negative

²³ L. Paul Jensen, *Subversive Spirituality, Transforming Mission through the Collapse of Space and Time* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series) (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 235. Quoting Chap Clark from "The Needs of the Class of 2004: An Interview with Dr. Chap Clark, Ph.D." *The Ivy Jungle Report* 7 (Summer 1999): 1, 12-15.

traits do not help the millennials to realize where they are in their faith because they are unable to self-reflect and tend to gravitate toward outer appearance and activity.

On the other hand, while the millennials are often seen as a challenge to ministry, their strength in character may coincide with corporate formation and present opportunities for this project. The general positive characteristics of millennials are that they are highly inclusive, earnest, and accepting. They are motivated by interaction, experience, and participation and, therefore, more likely to accept the participative nature of spiritual formation rather than being spectators in a Christendom church. Millennials are hungry for learning new and better things, and spiritual growth through corporate formation cultivates an environment of continuous learning.²⁴ Millennials are also a feedback generation and thus welcome the practice of encouragement which is, in essence, a system of regular feedback that helps to guide decision making and character growth.²⁵ The widening split of religion and spirituality among millennials is a positive condition to promote Christlike growth through spiritual formation within a faith community. Millennials understand the spiritual life as a journey. They are accustomed to seeking guidance through an internal compass, informed by a lifetime of experiences, inputs, personal preferences, and life choices. They believe that life decisions should be

²⁴ MindTickle, “10 Millennial Personality Traits That HR Managers Can’t Ignore,” accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.mindtickle.com/blog/10-millennial-personality-traits-hr-managers-cant-ignore/>.

²⁵ Millennial Marketing, “Who Are Millennials,” accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.millennialmarketing.com/who-are-millennials/>. 70% feel responsible to share feedback, seek advice, and build a strong network. Their decision-making factor is the opinions and perspectives of their networks.

guided by the best instinct of heart as a way of moving through moral complexity.²⁶ Consequently, their tendency to seek internal guidance can be close to meditative prayer that emphasizes listening to the Spirit. Therefore, corporate spiritual formation may turn their attention from facade and shallow self-perception, toward the internal, genuine transformation of heart and desire.

Against all the contextual factors that present cultural and social challenges, Lifelight needs to formulate a process of spiritual formation that nurtures young believers with diversity in intellect, spiritual maturity, and culture. Against the culture that is profoundly subversive to spiritual formation, the response by Lifelight is to become an authentic community that engages in spiritual formation together as a church, allowing space for conversation in order to discover one's spiritual journey and calling, while affirming and encouraging the practice of fivefold gifting to equip the community. The next section delves more deeply into this proposal and offers theological reflection together with literature review.

²⁶ David Stark, *Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2016), 78.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the primary literary sources chosen to develop the project's theological framework. The first set of books examines the significance of the presence of God, particularly the understanding of resurrection for the formation of the community. The second set considers both the call of God and the journey that follows in which individuals in the faith community are formed toward wholeness in Christ for the sake of others. The last set of books explores the church's missional identity and its function, particularly for developing and organizing leadership.

Presence of God: How Resurrection Shapes the Church

Spiritual formation is essentially about noticing God who is present every day of and every place in life and submitting to that presence. Richard Peace simply states, "We are formed in the presence of God."¹ The first set of books helps to establish this foundational idea of spiritual formation by examining what it means for a faith community to notice and live in the presence of God.

¹ Richard Peace, *Noticing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Kindle: 12.

The first book on this subject is Eugene Peterson's *Living the Resurrection: The Risen Christ in Everyday Life*. Peterson is convinced that Jesus' resurrection is at the center of spiritual formation as it "creates and then makes available the reality in which we are formed as new creatures in Christ by the Holy Spirit."² What develops out of this reality is the resurrection-center to which the people are called to restore and cultivate by embracing the rich tradition of spiritual formation so as to live appropriately and responsively. Peterson regards resurrection-wonder as the prerequisite for spiritual formation. He insists that "without wonder, we approach spiritual formation as a self-help project" by learning techniques, analyzing gifts, setting goals, and assessing progress.³ It is no surprise that spiritual formation is often motivated predominantly by anxiety and guilt. Peterson warns that "Anxiety and guilt restrict; they close us in on ourselves. They isolate us with feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness; they reduce us to ourselves at our worst."⁴ As a result, Peterson adds, spiritual formation becomes distorted into "moral workaholicism or pious athleticism."⁵ On the other hand, when Christians defocus, pause, and find themselves in a place where they are capable of wonder and awe of God, they begin to harness a reverent and worshipping capacity to respond to the presence of Christ.⁶

² Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 13.

³ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 115.

Peterson argues that people are formed in the routines. “Formation by resurrection” does not depend on a specially prepared setting or a carefully selected time and place but rather in the ordinariness of life.⁷ Specifically, the primary place for spiritual formation is the daily meal in which every person engages throughout the course of a day. Peterson applies stories of the Emmaus supper (Lk 24:30) and the Galilee beach breakfast (Jn 21:12) as examples of resurrection-meals in which, like the Lord’s Supper (Lk 22:12-20), Jesus serves as the host while the people are guests.⁸ The Lord’s table is then the sacramental practice for Christians to maintain their resurrection-center in the daily life that cultivates formation. Holy baptism is also the focal practice of a faith community, indicating whom one is as a follower of Jesus. Thus, living the resurrection means to recover the baptismal identity lived out in the community. When Christians submit to, or remember, holy baptism, they sustain their “essential identity as souls in the image of God in a company of resurrection friends.”⁹ Living the resurrection then becomes a practice - the work that defines one’s character and workday: the work of noticing, entering in, and engaging. Peterson continues his work on this subject in *Practice Resurrection* and affirms that practicing resurrection is to live together within a community in which the ultimate purpose is the formation of believers.¹⁰

The second book of particular importance is *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission* by David Fitch. For Fitch, most of the activities in the

⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁸ Ibid., 78.

⁹ Ibid., 117-118.

¹⁰ Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*. My summary.

community of faith centers around the presence of God. He defines faithful presence as “the reality that God is present in the world and that he uses a people faithful to his presence to make himself concrete and real amid the world’s struggles and pain.”¹¹ While his focus on God’s presence for the people aligns with Peterson’s views, Fitch engages the subject a step further by proposing that their response to God’s faithful presence is to be faithfully present in the world. Fitch explains that God’s plan is to become present to the world in and through his people who invite the world to join. Faithful presence is how God works while “a people tending to his presence make his presence visible for all to see.”¹² This begins with a group of people being restored to God’s presence in Jesus Christ.

Subsequently, Fitch presents seven practical and routine disciplines that are essential for the community: the Lord’s table, reconciliation, proclaiming the gospel, being with the least of these, being with children, the fivefold ministry, and kingdom prayer. These are, Fitch believes, all the people need to shape their lives into God’s presence for the transformation of the world, inhabiting neighborhoods, workplaces, playgrounds, schools, and families. All seven disciplines are engaged by the faith community in three circles: a “close circle” of believers gathered to encounter Christ’s presence, a “dotted circle” where the community invites others to experience together God’s presence, and a “half circle” where the believers are sent out to extend God’s

¹¹ David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), Kindle: 57-60.

¹² Ibid., 293-294.

presence among the marginalized and hurting.¹³ Fitch is adamant that this is how God's people join in the revolution of kingdom work. Where faithful presence is, people are reconciled to God and to each other. The kingdom becomes visible in neighborhoods, and the world takes notice. The Great Commission is fulfilled when "a people become present to God's presence in the world (*missio Dei*), and make space for Christ's presence to become real among them (incarnation) where the Father (reigning), the Son (being sent), and the Spirit (making the Son's presence real) work together."¹⁴ For Fitch, this is what the church is meant to be: "This faithful presence is at the heart of what it means to be the people of God. This is the thing we do that we call church. This is how God changes the world."¹⁵

Peterson and Fitch are particularly helpful to this project on two accounts. First, while neither Peterson nor Fitch spend extensive amounts of space on prayer, both authors positively lay the importance of prayer as the foundation for the formation of the community. Peterson describes it this way: "Keeping company with Jesus, observing what he does, and listening to what he says develop into a life of answering God, a life of responding to God, which is a life of prayer."¹⁶ Fitch also affirms that kingdom prayer, given to God's people by Christ most directly through the Lord's Prayer, is the foundation that gathers them into Christ's presence and initiates all the other

¹³ Ibid., 500-510. My summation of the three circles.

¹⁴ Ibid., 401-403.

¹⁵ Ibid., 91-93.

¹⁶ Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 122.

disciplines.¹⁷ Secondly, both authors acknowledge the communal essence of spiritual formation. While the sense of God's presence has been lost among Christians in the west for whom God is an individual belief, a personal relationship, and a private experience, Peterson argues that living the resurrection is a corporate, physical workout experienced in a network of personal relationships: "a following with other followers."¹⁸ For Fitch, his disciplines are more than a personal relationship with Jesus for they are intensely social, shaping a community in and around the presence of Christ for the world.¹⁹

The Call and the Journey

Spiritual formation begins with the call of God in a believer's life. The call then sustains the journey of faith toward the wholeness in Christ. The call and the journey are therefore inseparable. The call is an invitation to journey, and the journey assumes the call. Particularly helpful for this topic is Os Guinness' work that has become a textbook for understanding the Christian calling and Robert Mulholland's unique effort that appropriates personality types to spiritual formation. The work by James K. A. Smith also helps to further the understanding of how spiritual practices work toward formation.

Calling in Christian life is a subject incredibly vital and widely in demand. To this, Os Guinness is most contributive in *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Guinness helps to clarify calling in Christian life by dividing it into two parts: a primary calling (identity, call to be) and a secondary calling (vocation, call to act).

¹⁷ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 2560-2577. My summary.

¹⁸ Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 122.

¹⁹ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 437-438.

Primary calling, Guinness claims, is by God, to God, and for God. Christians are first and foremost “called to someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia).”²⁰ Secondary calling is for “everyone, everywhere, in everything” to “think, speak, live, and act entirely for him.”²¹ The order is of extreme importance for Guinness. Primary calling always comes before secondary calling. At the same time, primary calling must lead without fail to the secondary calling. Finally, the two must never split.

Guinness’ way of dividing the call provides a fuller understanding with an equal valuation of broader Christian calling (primary) and personal calling (secondary), and helps to overcome the dangers of imbalanced understanding of the call which he terms “catholic distortion,” a spiritual form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular, and “protestant distortions,” a secular form of dualism that elevates the secular at the expense of the spiritual.²² Guinness claims that his holistic account of the call includes both the spiritual and the secular and gives one’s calling a freedom yet responsibility. Guinness states, “There is no higher/lower, sacred/secular, perfect/permitted, contemplative/active, or first class/second class. Calling is the premise of Christian existence itself. Calling means that everyone, everywhere, and in everything fulfills his or her (secondary) callings in response to God’s (primary) calling.”²³ In other

²⁰ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), Kindle: 31.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.,

²³ Ibid., 34.

words, Christians' primary calling to love God bears the secondary calling to use their talent and desire to love people. Furthermore, Guinness asserts that a proper understanding and embracing of the call guards people from having envy, conceit, and greed that distort the calling and allows them to uphold its giftedness, stewardship, and service. Guinness repeatedly points to the importance of remembrance of the Caller as the way to focus and persevere in the journey. It guards people against sloth, privatization, and pluralization and gives them visions, thankfulness, transformation, and a sense of timing.

While *The Call* serves as a helpful resource to understand and clarify the Christian calling, Guinness' approach is predominantly individualistic and overlooks the function of a faith community that help individuals understand, discover, and assume the call. Yet, Guinness is helpful to this project on two accounts: connecting the call to spiritual formation and acknowledging it as a process - the journey. Calling does not answer questions about the purpose of life, what to do, or how to approach life; rather, calling sustains people through spiritual formation. As Guinness states, God's calling is "the key to igniting a passion for the deepest growth and highest heroism in life" - to imitate Jesus and grow to the full stature of Christ.²⁴ Guinness also engages Christian calling by a method of devotion rather than of instruction to imply that discovering one's calling is a journey. He contends that the calling reminds Christians that "we are all at different stages on the way and none of us alive has yet arrived" and rejects the false

²⁴ Ibid., 82.

notion “that everyone [is] as we are, at the same stage and with the same stories as ours.”²⁵

Robert Mulholland, a Wesleyan theologian, is most practical in helping to embrace the journey of faith that is unique to individuals in *Invitation to a Journey*. His definition of spiritual formation is compact and decisive: “a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”²⁶ Mulholland spends the first third of the book unpacking this fourfold definition. For Mulholland, once spiritual formation is properly understood as a process, all aspects of life become spiritual formation.²⁷ The life of a believer is then an experience of being conformed by God who is the initiator toward the wholeness. As such, spiritual discipline is the act of opening a space to allow God's transforming work in one's life. The sole purpose of God's work in conforming his people to the image of Christ is so that they can live for their created purpose: to be in a relationship with God and with others. Christians' wholeness is then actualized in living for the sake of others as they nurture one another within the faith community and participate in God's work of healing the brokenness and injustice in the world. Mulholland is convinced that such understanding of spiritual formation is all the more critical in a society prone to instant-gratification, excessive possession, self-help, self-actualization, privacy, and individualism.

Particularly unique to Mulholland's work is his use of Carl Jung's model of personality types (most commonly known as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) for

²⁵ Ibid., 113.

²⁶ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 39.

²⁷ Ibid., 64.

instructing a holistic spirituality for formation. Using the Jungian model, Mulholland identifies each personality type's preferred ways of spiritual exercises and helps perceive for each type a balanced integration of preferred ways with less-preferred ones. In so doing, Mulholland helps to avoid destructive, one-sided spirituality and to engage holistic spirituality that nurtures the whole person. On the other hand, Mulholland's use of classic stages of Christian journey (purgation, illumination, and union) by Dionysius and its corresponding disciplines in the final third of the book is of little help as they are pervasive of Christendom narrative and inherently individualistic. Mulholland also disappoints as he neither thoroughly elaborates on these stages nor integrates each stage with personality types.

Despite these shortcomings, Mulholland recognizes in his overall argument that spiritual formation cannot be without the communal effort. He emphasizes the corporate dimension of spiritual disciplines as he argues, "there is no way that an individual can be conformed to the image of Christ for others without the nurture of the body of Christ; and there is no way that the community of faith can be the body of Christ if it does not nurture the individual members toward wholeness in Christ."²⁸ His presentation of Jungian types for balanced formational practices also implies the necessity of corporate engagement of formation. This is helpful to this project's proposal of corporate spirituality to recognize that both the call and the journey require a communal element. Guinness concurs that "the call of Jesus is personal but not purely individual; Jesus

²⁸ Ibid., 630.

summons his followers not only to an individual calling but also to a corporate calling.”²⁹ The church’s relationships with those in and outside the faith community are not only the testing grounds of their spiritual life but also the places where the call is realized and actualized in the journey.

You Are What You Love by James K. A. Smith is another literature that helps to identify spiritual formation as a process by breaking down how a person is formed by spiritual practice. Smith is concerned primarily with what people love, which orients them toward some ultimate end - *telos*. In particular, the *telos* people live toward is not something that they know, believe, or think about but rather what they desire and love.³⁰ Smith bases his argument on a conviction that human beings are not fundamentally “thinking things” as prescribed by the prevailing idea of modernity first introduced by Descartes.³¹ Instead, human beings are lovers whose “wants and longings and desires are at the core of [their] identity, the wellspring from which [their] actions and behavior flow.”³² Thus, their primary orientation to the world is visceral, through the heart - not cerebral.³³ Smith puts it this way: “It’s not just that I ‘know’ some end or ‘believe’ in some *telos*. More than that, I long for some end. I want something, and want it ultimately. It is my desires that define me. In short, you are what you love.”³⁴

²⁹ Guinness, *The Call*, 98.

³⁰ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016). Kindle: 251.

³¹ Ibid., 120-121.

³² Ibid., 99-100.

³³ Ibid., 571.

³⁴ Ibid., 211-214.

As such, people cannot think their way into loving God by studying the Bible or learning about theology. Knowledge and information do not transfer into a new way of living. Instead, what changes people's longings and loves are liturgies. Liturgies are formative rituals and practices that capture people's imagination and allure them toward a *telos*, unconsciously but affectively.³⁵ People's desires are formed every day whether they know it or not, by habits that they unconsciously acquire through liturgies. Smith asserts that liturgies are not only present in the church but also everywhere in culture. He calls cultural practices that orient the people to rival versions of the good life as "rival liturgies."³⁶ For Smith, a struggle of faith or idolatry is ultimately an issue of liturgies, not theology, wrong actions, nor bad decisions. Temptation and sin is "a factor of de-formation and wrongly ordered habits... and the fruit of disordered wants, not just misunderstanding or ignorance."³⁷

What is needed then is a counter-formation to rival liturgies and a re-formation, or recalibration, of love. Spiritual formation is then mostly about re-habitation since people build up many disordered habits over a lifetime. Smith puts it this way: "Because if you are what you love and if love is a virtue, then love is a habit... shaped and configured by imitation and practice." The heart is then first calibrated through imitating exemplars as desires are caught more than they are taught.³⁸ Furthermore, the heart is re-formed by being immersed in new liturgies through rhythms, routines and rituals. In the journey of

³⁵ Ibid., 782-783.

³⁶ Ibid., 432.

³⁷ Ibid., 430-431.

³⁸ Ibid., 411.

faith, the human heart is part compass and part internal guidance system that regularly needs calibration, “turning it to be directed to the Creator, our magnetic north.”³⁹ Out of this conviction, Smith argues that what the church calls discipleship and Christian formation ultimately should be oriented toward the goal of providing counter-liturgies that help the congregation to take up practices and habits that aim their love and desire toward God, the way they learn to “put on” Christ (Col. 3:12–16). Smith goes on to provide practical applications on how to recognize and produce liturgies to create habits in households and work places. He also gives examples of how the church should reform its approach in children’s school, youth group, and the missions.

Smith is helpful to this project by providing a deeper understanding to an intricate process of how one’s desire, or the heart, is being formed. His work essentially speaks to the necessity of spiritual practice. Simply put, spiritual formation takes practice, and practice takes repetition. Smith’s attention to rival liturgies and de-formation in particular is incredibly significant yet typically ignored. His suggestion of a liturgical Examen of daily life to unveil the surrounding reality is exceptionally useful. In addition, Smith is in agreement with both Mulholland and Guinness in pointing out that spiritual formation, or re-habitation, is a communal endeavor. His concept that re-formation of desire is caught more than taught implies the importance of covenantal community. Smith says it clearly: “The church—the body of Christ—is the place where God invites us to renew our loves, reorient our desires, and retrain our appetites... There is no sanctification without the

³⁹ Ibid., 389.

church.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, Smith calls on Christians to a holistic response that intentionally recalibrates their unconscious desires by immersing themselves in liturgies “to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all—a vision encapsulated by the shorthand ‘the kingdom of God.’”⁴¹

Leadership and Formation

Leadership is of high value in modern society, particularly in the Western world. All organizations including the church bind people together through structure, process, and leadership. The question for the church is not the necessity of leadership in the life of the church but discovering the essence of leadership that faithfully reflects its missional identity and serves its formative role for individuals. Gorman’s theological interpretation of Pauline letters and Van Gelder’s missional ecclesiology are particularly insightful in finding the answer to this question.

In *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, Michael Gorman, a highly regarded scholar of Pauline theology, questions what Paul says about the *missio Dei* and the church’s participation in it. Gorman examines the hermeneutics of Pauline letters and concludes that Paul wanted the first century Christians as a faith community not merely to believe the gospel but also to become the gospel and in doing so, to embody God’s salvation and participate in the mission of God. Gorman argues that the missional life is when the community of faith embraces God’s call to be a witness to the gospel that is both embodied and narrated and thus simultaneously integrated into all

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1047-1048, 1108-1109.

⁴¹ Ibid., 103-105.

aspects of the church's participation.⁴² This inseparability of the church's life together and its witness to the world is what forms the church to become the gospel. In other words, the missional life is both to benefit from God's mission of salvation and reconciliation and to participate in bearing witness to further God's mission by becoming a faithful embodiment of it.

Gorman uses the term "theosis" to refer to spiritual formation and defines it as "Spirit-enabled transformative participation in the life and character of God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus."⁴³ Theosis is not only the starting point of the mission but also a proper theological framework for an anticipatory participation where "the new creation of Christlike love, *shalom*, reconciliation with God and one another, and restorative justice" is present among those who live in a formative way of life.⁴⁴ In other words, peace, love, and justice are not merely to be hoped for but presently embodied in the faith community. Gorman advocates Paul's conviction that the spiritual life of the church - "the unity of community in love" - is appropriate to the gospel and the essence of its corporate witness in the world (Phil 1:27-2:16).⁴⁵ Both the gospel and its witness are in fact, not only relational realities but a missional identity of which God, through Christ and by the Spirit, makes his people into a community of Christlike stature. Transformation is then "a liturgical and missional participation in the

⁴² Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (The Gospel and Our Culture Series (GOCS)) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), Kindle: 224.

⁴³ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 348.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 378.

life of the triune God that bears witness to God's desire to reconcile people in Christ so that they experience the righteousness and glory of God together."⁴⁶ Gorman argues, while inward journey and external journey are distinguishable at times, these two seemingly separate journeys are in fact ideally one and the same. This means the church's mission is unified in both of its centripetal (moving toward a center) and centrifugal (moving away from a center) pursuit.⁴⁷ For Paul, Gorman asserts, the church's internal life and in its public witness feed one another, and are, ultimately, one.⁴⁸ Consequently, the practices of the church - evangelism, peace, reconciliation and justice - are all aspects of the missional life of the church, a missional theosis.

Gorman contributes well in establishing Pauline theology around holistic spirituality and the missional call of the faith community that guards against compartmentalizing internal and external activities of the church, as well as segregating specific duties to specific leadership. Particularly for this project, Gorman's Pauline theology affirms that narrating and embodying the gospel is not only the duty of leaders but also what leaders become for the community. In addition, the church's internal life, its centripetal pursuit, is also its missional call. Consequently, he attributes the work of embodying the gospel as a process, a becoming, which is most apparent from the title of the book. Gorman also affirms that the call to become the gospel is for all followers of Christ whether they are exercising inward service to the community or outward service as witness to the world. Gorman's Pauline theology can be a foundation for Lifelight's hope

⁴⁶ Ibid., 302.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 390.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 393.

that corporate spiritual formation will enable outward witness by an inward deepening for the mission. Gorman's hermeneutical approach to the topic, however, provides little guidance on how a church like Lifelight should examine its own context and discern how to reform its participation in the *missio Dei*. To this end, Craig Van Gelder's work on missional ecclesiology is most helpful.

Much like his earlier work in *The Essence of the Church*, most critical to Van Gelder in *The Ministry of the Missional Church* is rescuing the church from its misunderstanding and systematic displacement that results from defining a congregation primarily "in functional terms as something the church does" rather than "in terms of something the church is, as something that is related to its nature."⁴⁹ Van Gelder asserts that being missional moves the church in a fundamentally different direction. That is, "community created by the Spirit" that has "a unique nature, or essence, which gives it a unique identity" explores what the church does in light of the church's missional nature.⁵⁰ Van Gelder orders the formation of the church in this sequence: "The nature of the church provides the basis for understanding the ministry of the church - the church is. The ministry of the church provides the framework for understanding the organization of the church - the church does what it is. The organization of the church provides the structures for the church to carry out its ministry - the church organizes what it does."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), Kindle: 1335-1337.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 165-171.

⁵¹ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2000), Kindle: 2367-2370.

Thus the church's purpose, culture, and structure are rather to be understood as derivative dimensions of the unique essence of the church within its context.

Van Gelder furthers his argument by sharpening his focus on the Spirit's role in the church. Foundational to his argument is that God as a creator "creates the church through the Spirit," and "calls, gathers, and sends the church into the world to participate in God's mission."⁵² In other words, it is "the Spirit-led ministry of the church that flows out of the Spirit-created nature of the church," from which leadership and the development of organization function.⁵³ As a result, the primary focus for the church shifts toward discerning and responding to the leading of the Spirit as the church explores and engages its context. Consequently, the church continuously cultivates its Spirit-led missional identity, particularly in understanding and anticipating the ministry, and organizes its leadership for support.

Van Gelder's work does not connect the church's missional nature and practices directly to spiritual formation that derive out of it. His contribution, while detailed and relevant to many churches, is primarily the principles for systematic reorganization. Indeed, Van Gelder's work is invaluable to churches that have forgotten their missional identity and reversed their order of systematic formation in align with the Christendom narrative. Particularly for Lifelight and this project, the Spirit-created nature as the foundation of the church prompts its leadership to engage in a practice to cultivate the missional nature that continues to transform individuals within the community toward

⁵² Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 193-194.

⁵³ Ibid., 189.

Christlike stature. In both Gorman's theology and Van Gelder's ecclesiology, living a communal life consistent with the missional nature of the church is crucial. In living out of this identity and into this role, a faith community is a narrative and narrated witness, reconciled to God through Christ, and invited as a natural part of its reconciliation to participate in God's mission of making peace both inside and outside the church (Phil 2:6-11).⁵⁴ Leadership for the church is then both a formational practice and a witness that proclaims how God's people live and grow in loving harmony (Jn 13:35). The next chapter continues to develop this line of reasoning, offering a more robust explanation of the theology that forms the foundation of this project.

⁵⁴ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 282.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF CORPORATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION

This chapter presents a theological foundation of spiritual formation at Lifelight. The chapter first examines God's presence with his people as the overarching theme of the Bible and how the church is formed to wholeness in its encounter of the risen Christ. In addition, the chapter presents how God calls his people to a journey of faith. Lastly, the chapter surveys the work of the Holy Spirit that empowers awareness and communication between people and equips the body of Christ for the mission of God.

Presence of God

The Bible in its entire narrative is about God who creates, reveals, and unites himself with his people. A. W. Tozer determines that "God's presence is the central fact of Christianity."¹ Essentially, God desires to be with his created beings in the fullness of his presence. This is what God intended for his creation from the very beginning. In Genesis, Adam and Eve recognized the sound of God walking in the garden at the time of evening breezes and hid from him (Gn 3:8). The scene implies that this was a recurring

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Seattle: Amazon Classics, 2016), Kindle: 25.

interaction between the created beings and the Creator God in the evening at the garden. It is also in this occurrence the with-God life that God intended for his people was broken (Gn 3:9). Subsequently, when God called Abraham, God acted on his relational pursuit to bring together a people again (Gn 1:27-28). Furthermore, throughout the stories of exodus, judges, kings, and prophets, God persistently called Israel back to his presence. His desire for Israel, given to the prophet Micah, was most clear: “to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8). The book of Revelation ultimately reveals the fulfillment of God’s desire for his people: “It is done... I will be their God and they will be my children” (Rv 21:6, 7).

What transcends God’s presence from the Old Testament to the New Testament is the coming of Jesus as *Emmanuel*, “God is with us” (Mt 1:23). Peterson argues in *Living the Resurrection* that the resurrected Jesus redefined the disciples’ relationship with him.² He contends that the disciples who had gone fishing in John 21 were not abandoning the Great Commission but actually living out the commission. Peterson observes that the disciples started to get the sense that “Jesus’ resurrection had everything to do with their ordinary lives. They needed practice in this reorientation, and they plunged into ordinariness - the old familiar workplace of sea and the fishing boat.”³ As such, the resurrection of Jesus is not about a future resurrection but rather about the present reality of his presence. The good news is not simply about Jesus rising from the dead but that resurrection has happened. God’s faithful presence is evermore with his people today.

² Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 67.

³ Ibid., 68.

Jesus concludes the Great Commission by saying, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). These concluding words promise that God will extend his presence to the people as they are sent on God’s mission. The heart of the Christian message, as Fitch states, is that “God is waiting for us to push into conscious awareness of his presence.”⁴

God Forming People

God’s presence with his people expresses his yearning for the transformation of his people into his image, *imago Dei*, to become whom he created them to be in a relationship with him and with others. The life and resurrection of Jesus is the culmination of such yearning that sets and keeps in motion the paradox of God’s kingdom on earth - already but not yet. The love of God in Christ gives people hope that “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Paul identifies believers’ ongoing formation with Jesus’ resurrection in his letter to the church in Colossae: “So if you have been raised with Christ... you have clothed yourselves with the new self” (Col 3:1, 10). What makes it possible to attain this new self is the grace of Jesus by which the people have been saved and which forms them to be like him: “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph 2:8, 10). For Paul, this way of life is “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death” (Phil 3:10). This is most clearly addressed in Ephesians as the purpose of the body of Christ, the church, to come

⁴ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 168-169.

to “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

For this purpose, at the center of fellowship in the early church was their pursuit of growth to wholeness in Christ by coming together in the presence of God (Acts 2:46). The Wesleyan-holiness tradition refers to this wholeness in Christ as entire sanctification, stated in the Church of the Nazarene’s tenth article of faith this way: “We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God’s grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification.”⁵ This, argues Mulholland, is the ultimate reality of human wholeness and “the consummation for which each heart longs.”⁶ The community life of believers is then essentially an experience of becoming like Christ in the dwelling place of God, the church. But this pursuit toward Christlikeness for the sake of God’s mission is prevalently missing in today’s church. Instead, a maturity of faith is an assumed and abstract idea, hardly regarded and pursued. Even while many churches are rediscovering the *missio Dei*, calling themselves missional churches, they seem to ignore the fact that being missional is a product of being Christ-like. In order for the church to grow into maturity, the church needs to practice entering into the transforming presence of Christ, and the rhythm and structure of its corporate life must be organized around the awareness, participation, and sustenance of spiritual development.

⁵ *Church of the Nazarene Manual* 2013-2017 (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2013), 32.

⁶ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 76-77.

Spiritual practice is a decisive activity of placing oneself to receive grace, surrendering in a consistent manner to God's presence, and allowing God's transforming work in all facets of life. The church, particularly in the Wesleyan tradition, has referred to such practice of spiritual formation as the means of grace. Wesley defines the means of grace as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God, to be ordinary channels whereby he might convey to persons prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace."⁷ Wesleyans strongly affirm that people cannot become holy through their own efforts, and their transformation is ultimately the work of God, in Christ, through the Spirit. The desire for growth and the ability to respond and act in obedience is also inspired and empowered by God. Thus, the means of grace is, as written in the tenth article of faith for the Nazarenes, "the grace of entire sanctification that includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as Christ-like disciples and how we consciously nurture, and carefully attend to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality."⁸ The instituted means of grace refers to the means that Christ himself directed his disciples to participate. They are particularly relevant for this project and include searching the Scriptures (which refers to reading, praying and meditating on the Word), the Lord's Table (the Holy Communion or the Eucharist), prayer, and Christian conference by which Wesley meant Christian conversation about God and faith.⁹

⁷ Wesley Center for Applied Theology, "The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 16: The Means of Grace," accessed March 8, 2018, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace/>.

⁸ *Church of the Nazarene Manual*, 33.

⁹ Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1991),

Three instituted means of grace are particularly pertinent to this ministry initiative. First, God's Word is the primary means to encounter the presence of God. In psalms, the psalmist sought to delight in God's presence by "meditating [on his law] day and night" (Ps 1:2). Paul instructs the community in Colossae to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom" so that they may encounter Christ and be formed to the image of Christ (Col 3:16). Ultimately, faith is received "from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). God's Word, as Smith points out, captures people's imagination to desire what God desires, recalibrates their "heart-habits," and becomes "the orienting center of our social imaginary, shaping our very perception of things before we even think about them."¹⁰

The Bible then must be approached with the goal to enter the transforming presence of God. Yet the church in modernity has treated the Bible as a guidebook to figure out how to achieve happiness or how to live, primarily a means for knowledge rather than an encounter with the presence of the risen Christ. Richard Foster remarks on how "we separate the written word from the revealed Word - Jesus Christ, by coming to the Bible with the mind only and not the heart."¹¹ On the other hand, mystics in the past and present have encountered the presence of God in the Word by practicing various methods of meditative reading. By adapting the ancient approaches to the Word, the church's Bible study can cultivate a passionate community that seeks the presence of God

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¹⁰ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 1328-1331.

¹¹ Richard J. Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: HarperCollins eBooks, 2009), Kindle: 72.

and is thus transformed to live the incarnational life of the Gospel. Peterson emphasizes that by approaching the Scripture to encounter God's presence, churches "guard [themselves] against depersonalizing the text into questions and answers, definitions and dogmas, and instead, make space for the biblical story to fuse with [their stories]."¹² In short, spiritual formation calls for meditative reading of the Bible for the purpose of transformation rather than information.

Secondly, the church encounters the presence of God at the table of the Lord. Jesus' presence has been uniquely real and recognizable around the table as he was "known... in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24: 35). The Lord's table is utterly about the presence of the risen Lord. It is a practice that shapes God's people to be present to the presence of Christ. At the table, the people also learn to tend to one another and invite each other to peace and reconciliation. Paul's warning to Corinthians of their disregard for Christ's presence around the Table which resulted in sickness and death reflects the seriousness of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11: 30). Fitch claims that the table is "perhaps the single best opportunity to train ourselves to tend to his presence for our lives."¹³ Unfortunately, the Eucharist today has been individualized with the bread and cup in a little plastic package and treated as a pious remembrance or personal encouragement. Fitch laments that "we are lost in our inability to be present before God, among ourselves, and in our neighborhoods."¹⁴ The church then must reclaim the Lord's table as the

¹² Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub., 2006), Kindle: 1030.

¹³ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 651.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

sacramental practice for Christians that maintains the resurrection-focus that cultivates formation in the daily life.¹⁵ Resetting the table of the Lord as the central practice of the church can help overcome divisions and distance within the community as individuals submit all of their divisions and personal agendas to Christ's presence at the table. Fitch proposes that "if we can recognize his presence at work around the table, we will be able to recognize his work in the rest of our lives as well."¹⁶

Lastly, the church encounters the presence of God in prayer. Prayer is about discerning the presence of God and responding to that presence in ways that bring new life. It is the entryway into Christ's presence in the daily life. Psalms are prayers of people in God's presence, seeking justice, providence, comfort, mercy and transformation. The gospel writers often site Jesus getting away to rest and pray (Mt 14:23; 1:35; Mk 6:46; Lk 5:16). Jesus also calls his followers to pray: to abide in him as he abides in the Father (Jn 15:4, 10). The church has a rich tradition of liturgy from written prayers to meditative prayers like the prayer of Examen that not only seek to talk to God but also to be still and attentively listen. But modern individualism has reduced prayer to something intensely personal. Consequently, the one thing most Christians are ashamed to admit but desire the most is to know how to pray. Prayer is something Christians must learn as the disciples intuited when they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk 11:1). Christians must also realize that prayer is not about expressing one's self to God but submitting to God's presence to be formed into wholeness in Christ.

¹⁵ Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 116.

¹⁶ Fitch. *Faithful Presence*, 633-636.

These means of grace that are instituted by the Lord are essential elements in the life of a believer to encounter the presence of God. They are not only more enriching when they are practiced in the community of faith but are, in fact, first and foremost, corporate practices. In essence, the church is also a means of grace by which God nurtures his people into the living body of Christ in his presence.

God with People

God's presence is essentially about God being with his people. Foster asserts that the Bible is about "how God has made this with-life possible and will bring it to pass."¹⁷ Growing deeper into this with-God life is God's will for his people that aligns with their deepest desire and transforms them into Christlikeness (Rv 21:3). All of humanity is called to this life with God to reclaim their truest self as God intended for them. Such calling in the Bible is a central and dynamic theme that becomes a metaphor for the life of faith itself. Thus, spiritual formation is an intentional and continual commitment to a lifelong process of growth toward wholeness in Christ as people seek and submit to God's presence.

The primary calling in the life of God's people is to journey with God. There are two critical theological aspects to this call. First, no person is excluded from this call. All of God's people, not just selected and mature ones, are called to this journey that culminates in growth as they submit to God's sovereign presence in their lives, experience grace, and live in obedience. Every person is required to answer in one direction or the other, to choose either a life with God or a life without God. The call to a

¹⁷ Foster, *Life with God*, 7.

with-God life was true for Abraham who was called to leave his familiar and comfortable home and journey to a foreign land (Gn 12:1-3). Out of the bush with a blazing fire, God called Moses to a journey with the awesome task of liberating his people from bondage of Egypt (Ex 3:1-10). The same call came to ordinary fishermen in Galilee (Mt 4:18-22), and to a Pharisee on his way to persecute the followers of the Way (Acts 9:5-6). God's call to his people is not to just to get saved but to come into his presence that enables them to realize their true identity in Christ.

Secondly, the call to journey is both personal and corporate. In fact, the call is first and foremost corporate. The whole nation of Israel faced the call to choose with-God life: "so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him" (Dt 30:19-20). The Israelites are called to be "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex 19: 6). This priesthood extends to all followers of Christ in the New Testament who are together "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9). This commitment to corporate calling is for the ongoing formation of a faith community. The church is called to be a community of encouragement, correction, reconciliation, and healing. For this calling and purpose, the church is given gifts to equip and build up one another.

The with-God life suggests that a Christian is always on the road as a follower of Christ. The story of Israel's exodus from Egypt is a fitting metaphor for the journey of with-God life, as "from the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded" (Ex 17:1). Their journey recorded from the starting point, stage by stage, portraying a Christian's journey from spiritual bondage to

freedom in Christ, from salvation to the eschaton in heaven (Nm 33:1-2). The places through which the Israelites passed corresponds with the stages of spiritual journey.

Ruth Barton parallels the journey out of Egypt by Israelites with the people's own spiritual journey in *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. Beginning in the stage of "pre-awareness" where the Israelites are not even aware of their bondage and need for God's rescue, they slowly move to "awareness" and then to "the turning point" as their oppression escalates (Ex 1:7, 6:9).¹⁸ Similarly, when people become aware of the brokenness and need for a new life, they then often move to seek God. As "their cry for help [rises] up to God" and God comes to the rescue, Israelites step into a journey with God in a new-found freedom (Ex 2:23-25). God leads the people of Israel through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by the day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex 13:17, 21-22). God is kind to keep the Israelites from challenges they are not yet equipped to face, as he does the same for those at the beginning of their life with God, showing up in a tangible way to assure them of his presence (Ex 13:17-18).¹⁹ But the journey eventually leads to a challenge. For the Israelites, it is finding themselves between the murdering Egyptians and the raging Red Sea (Ex 14:9). Yet, it is also an opportunity to trust in God and learn "to keep still" in his presence as God uses the trouble times to show his glory and strength (Ex 14:4, 13-14).

Wesley's doctrine of sanctification explores the Christian journey as a process of growth. Sanctification is by definition, a process of becoming holy and Christ-like. The

¹⁸ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Kindle: 88.

¹⁹ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*, 83. Barton calls this "The Roundabout Way."

Nazarenes' tenth article of faith notes, "believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor."²⁰ Paul, in writing to Corinthians, infers spiritual formation as growth when he refers to Corinthians as "infants in Christ" and calls for maturity, indicating not an instantaneous transformation but a process of slow growth (1 Cor 3:1). This is unlike how most Christians in North America today expect to get zapped at some point and instantly transformed to maturity. As Smith tirelessly points out in *You Are What You Love*, if the character trait of "moral, kingdom-reflecting disposition" we seek is formed by practice, and "if such character trait identifies one's spiritual maturity, then one's maturity can be identified in various stages in spiritual formation."²¹ Barton is perhaps most perceptive to also point out that the spiritual journey is "not like a linear line where we arrive at some location and then we're done but rather, a cyclical process that continues to move us in the direction of greater spiritual maturity and greater freedom and abandonment to God."²² In other words, Christian maturity is not an abstract state but a fluid movement toward Christlikeness, culminating in a with-God life.

Christians have understood from the beginning that spiritual formation is a process, a growth or a journey. There are several key models and metaphors that serve as a map with developmental stages of the spiritual path toward wholeness in Christ. Dionysius in the late fifth century provides the classical model upon which many other models are built on, divided in three stages: purgation (a disconnection from God),

²⁰ *Church of the Nazarene Manual*, 32.

²¹ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 356-359.

²² Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 88.

illumination (an emergence toward Christ), and union (oneness with God).²³ Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century is also a significant contributor who identifies the stages of growth, intuitive to modern psychology, by four degrees of love, starting from a love of self for self, then a love of God for self (for what God gives), then a love of God for God (for who God is), and finally arriving in a love of self for God in which one moves toward wholeness by loving the entire creation of God.²⁴ For Jan Van Ruysbroeck in the fourteenth century, the journey begins in an active life, then to an interior (yearning) life of intentional pursuit of God. The yearning then results in a contemplative life (union with God) that moves a person further toward others to live a missional life (a marriage of contemplative and active life).²⁵

Saint John of the Cross in the sixteenth century also divides the journey into four stages: active night of the senses, passive night of senses, active night of spirit, and passive night of the spirit.²⁶ Saint John's active night of senses coincides with both of Bernard and Ruysbroeck's first two stages. While both Bernard and Ruysbroeck seemingly skip over how the transformation occurs, Saint John's passive night of senses describes the stage of transformation, linking the leap by Bernard between a love of God for self and a love of God for God, and Ruysbroeck's leap between an interior life and a contemplative life. Finally, Janet Hagberg is the latest contributor in *The Critical Journey*.

²³ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), Kindle: 167-170. Some interpretations include "awakening" as the first stage.

²⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God* (Unknown), Kindle: 24-31.

²⁵ Paul A. Böer, ed., *Blessed John of Ruysbroeck* (Chicago: Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2012), Kindle: 8-15.

²⁶ Gerald G. May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between*

Hagberg's model is most helpful for modern Christians to identify the stages of growth within the current church culture built within the modern narrative. In Hagberg's first three stages, one moves from a recognition of God, to a pursuit of discipleship, and to a productive life of service. In her fourth stage, however, one goes through an inward journey of struggle and wrestles with God. This leads to the latter two stages of journey where one discovers a fresh sense of God's calling and purpose, and accordingly, a life of love that reflects God's love to others.²⁷

These models of the stages in the journey with God are far from how the church treats spiritual formation as a program or a merit to be earned. So-called discipleship programs in many churches serve the culture of instant gratification and the possessiveness of an acquisitive society that is a significant cause of the recent spiritual undergrowth. Yet, God's call to a journey of faith implies that people are all at different stages and that they can look ahead. In addition, an understanding of spiritual stages can help to instill confidence and provide reassurance during a certain part of the journey that is challenging and difficult. Once the church embraces spiritual formation as a journey, it turns to depend on God's presence and his kindness and grace.

God Between People

The presence of God in the fellowship of believers is perhaps most mysterious. While most Christians find it easy to grasp and imagine "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" and "the love of God" in Paul's benediction to Corinthians, "the communion of

Darkness and Spiritual Growth (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2009), Kindle: 74-97. My summary.

²⁷ Janet Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co, 1995). My summary.

the Holy Spirit” leaves them to ponder its meaning (2 Cor 13:13). Many things told in regard to the Holy Spirit: to live by the Spirit (Gal 5:16), to reap from the Spirit (Gal 6:8-10), to be led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14), and to pursue the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 14:1). But many Christians are not sure how the Holy Spirit helps them to live for the kingdom. John V. Taylor attempts to ease this uncertainty in *The Go-Between God*, describing “the communion” as “the in-between-ness” of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ He argues that what the Holy Spirit gives is “the gift of awareness which opens our eyes to one another, makes us see as we never saw before; the secret of all evolution, the spark that sets off most revolution, the dangerous life-giver, the Holy Spirit.”²⁹

Accordingly, the communion of the Holy Spirit first activates awareness and opens the eyes. The Spirit is the force that causes Christians to see that which they have yet seen and to enliven something to become present. The Spirit opens the eyes, first and foremost, to Christ. This is how the Spirit made Jesus ceaselessly aware of God’s presence and power. The same Spirit makes God’s people see the resurrected Christ in their daily lives. The Spirit also opens their awareness towards the reality of self: the actual and the potential. It is by the communion of the Spirit that Jesus pronounced Simon as Peter, empathetic to both the actual and the potential of his disciple (Jn 1:42).³⁰ In the same way, the Spirit allows people to become aware of their own actual, false self and the true, potential self and the same reality in those they encounter. In addition, the

²⁸ John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit & The Christian Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 15.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

Spirit opens the eyes to see and recognize the other. It is the Spirit who made Jesus aware, sensitive and open to the particulars of every person with whom he crossed paths, especially the ones no one else noticed. The same Spirit opens the eyes of his people to see fellow Christians, neighbors, needs in the community, and the heartbreaking brutality of the world. Taylor puts it simply: “The Holy Spirit is the invisible third party who stands between me and the other, making us mutually aware.”³¹ The power of the Holy Spirit is not about a supernatural, healing ability or speaking in tongues but rather about having eyes open and hearts and minds aware of the reality that surrounds people. In short, the Spirit is the giver of the vision. This is the first and foremost gift of the go-between God for his people.

Taylor asserts that the Holy Spirit not only acts as a go-between and makes two people aware of each other, but also “sets up a current of communication between them.”³² The first act of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was enabling communication as the disciples preached and people of numerous origins heard them in their own language (Acts 2:1-11). The Spirit not only translates and interprets to help people to hear the other but also communicates to them about the other, giving discernment to “guide us into all truth” (Jn 16:13). The Holy Spirit helped to communicate between Paul and Ananias, and inspired Barnabas to defend Paul’s conversion to other disciples (Acts 9:19, 27). The gift of communication from the go-between member of the Trinity essentially unites God’s people to “be of the same

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 17.

mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind... that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:2, 5). In the communion of the Holy Spirit, the council in Jerusalem decided unanimously for a decision over the issue of restrictions for Gentiles: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28). The communion of the Holy Spirit results in fellowship where the church seeks to speak the truth in love with civility and mutual respect, cultivating a community that understands itself to be living members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, confessing together with all Christians in all times and places under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

This is the Spirit that Jesus promised to send on the day of Pentecost when he told the disciples to wait and pray until the Holy Spirit came to empower them to accomplish the work he has given them to do (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8). But this command and the substance of the Holy Spirit to the mission of the church that was potent to Christians in the first century is largely forgotten today. Instead, the Spirit has become most misunderstood, underutilized and un-worshipped. While many Christians repeatedly assert piously that without the Holy Spirit they cannot do anything for the mission, the church still depends largely on man-made programs and trust in human resources. Yet this is precisely what Jesus forbade the disciples from doing. They were instructed not to leave Jerusalem, not to go alone without the Holy Spirit, and not to take on the mission with their own resources and strategies (Acts 1:4-5, 7, 8). In fact, Jesus himself received the mission only by the communion of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:14, 18). Jesus’ disciples were unfit for the ministry despite all they had done and learned from Jesus until they received power from the Holy Spirit. Thus, as it was for the apostles, there can be no spiritual formation or mission until the church is empowered by

the Holy Spirit, having its eyes opened to see the resurrected Jesus and the reality that surrounds it.

The church must trust that only in the communion of the Spirit is it empowered, enabled, and led to grow to maturity by mutually attending to each other's with-God life and participating in the *missio Dei* by the gift given to the church from the Spirit. The church should no longer depend on human resources and human leaders to help it grow, turning to the latest church growth conference, new leadership skill and new insights from the latest research, instead of seeking the power of the Holy Spirit. Once the church embraces the Spirit's role in the mission of the church, it can in turn discern and respond primarily to the leading of the Spirit in its pursuit of the mission of God and living out its identity as a body of Christ. The church then focuses on creating a safe space in which people are encouraged and empowered to listen to the Holy Spirit, embarking on God's call to the journey of faith, and living obediently to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Eventually, the people learn to trust the work of the Holy Spirit not only in their own selves but in the lives of those they endeavor to equip; they too can hear the Holy Spirit without needing the clergy to tell them what to do.

What becomes the culture of a faith community in communion with the Spirit of God is an interdependence among its members. The people of a faith community as members of the body of Christ are linked to each other in Christ and dependent on each other (1 Cor 12:27). Fitch points out that "the Holy Spirit works in the social space where people become interdependent."³³ This is what Paul means when he instructed Ephesians

³³ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 2350.

to lead a worthy life together “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another with love” (Eph 4:2). Interdependence restores the culture of the early church’s entitling of each other as “servants, working together” (1 Cor. 3:9) and “co-worker” (Phil 2:25).

Holistic spirituality only takes place in the midst of relationships with others, not apart from them. Relationships with one another reflect maturity, and whether the church is indeed a body of Christ, as Paul wrote: “Your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing” (2 Thes 1:3). For this reason, Guder notes that a believer’s individual identity as a member of the body of Christ is “an essential aspect of the ‘how’ of Christian mission.”³⁴ Hebrews 10:24-25 instructs this well: “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” The language of “us,” “together,” and “one another” in Hebrews 10 refer neither to a small group, a conference, nor a short-term strategy of leadership development but the whole community intentional in equipping each other. By paying attention to such language in the epistles, the church can restore the New Testament emphasis that Christians meet together to build each other up to participate in God’s mission.

Unless the church recognizes the gift of the go-between God, it can make no space nor give permission for the Holy Spirit to enter in between lives of people in the community. Leaving out the work of the Holy Spirit leaves the people disconnected from

³⁴ Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), Kindle: 2033-2034.

a relationship with one another, their work from spirituality, and the presence of God in their daily life. If the participation in God's mission is to live incarnationally, it fundamentally requires an attention to the ordinary in the light of disclosure, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Taylor is brilliant to simply state that "the Christian mission is the opening of our eyes towards other people."³⁵ The church's participation in the mission of God must mean re-shaping its culture to submit to the indwelling spirit of God in the midst and be a Spirit-led people called and gathered to equip one another.

Opening to the Spirit's work in-between the people, the church encounters Christ through the experience of spiritual gifts in its participation of the *missio Dei*. The variety of roles listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 set the church on mission with the gift given to the church to equip and strengthen its members. Ephesians 4:1-16 is especially a crucial directive to activate the body of Christ around fivefold gifting: apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching (Eph 4:11). Alan Hirsch in *5Q* attests that Ephesians 4 defines an understanding of the purpose of God in the church, and by extension who the church is and how it is to direct its affairs.³⁶ Fivefold gifting is the key for the church to encounter God in the fellowship of believers and work toward God's purpose for the faith community. Ephesians 4 is elaborate yet precise in indicating that these gifts are given so that the body of Christ might be equipped, perfected, or completed (v.12), be built and grown into maturity (v.13, 15), attain to the fullness of Christ (v.13), live in the unity (v.13), be kept from trickery, doctrinal heresy,

³⁵ Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 22.

³⁶ Alan Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* (Columbia, VA: 100Movements, 2017), Kindle: 874-875.

or deception (v.14), be grown up into Christ, the head (v.15), and be properly ordered and equipped to grow in love as his body (v.16). Each member of the church expresses their own gift to contribute to the body of Christ while being mutually dependent on others. All members also equip each other to activate what others have been gifted in order to fulfill the Christ-given purpose of all believers. Embracing fivefold gifting in the fellowship of believers, Hirsch asserts, moves beyond mere self-expression and into “a dynamic, reciprocal process where each one of us becomes both a giver and a receiver, a leader and a follower.”³⁷

The gift from the Spirit is the way the church gets to participate in what Christ has done and is doing and what God desires to do in and through the church. The people encounter Christ in others and experience the power of God in their ongoing relationships with one another while intentionally seeking God together. As the grace and love of God bind his people to his presence in with-God life with God toward wholeness in Christ, the communion of the Holy Spirit activates and sustains their faith, communicates the truth to one another, and empowers them to participate in God’s mission. Spiritual formation for the church is God’s will, in Christ’s presence, and the Holy Spirit’s work. It is the way for the church to grow in deeper understanding of one another, in greater dependence, in one spirit and one mind, practicing not a democracy but “pneumatocracy” (governed by the Spirit).³⁸ It is what makes the church authentically a church.

³⁷ Hirsch, *5Q*, 1058.

³⁸ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 2385-2386.

PART THREE
PRACTICAL MINISTRY PLAN

CHAPTER 4

GOALS AND CONTENT

Part Three develops a ministry plan from theory to practice that will help the members of Lifelight begin practicing spiritual formation, sustain their intention for growth, and actualize growth together as a community. This chapter begins by summarizing the theological implications of the previous chapter as well as the preferred future for Lifelight. The chapter also lists goals for the ministry initiative in pursuit of this preferred future and outlines the content to accomplish those goals. The content primarily establishes key principles of each practice: meditative prayer, encouragement and leadership by fivefold gifting, which may also help to preserve them within appropriate biblical and contextual parameters.

Theological Implications

The overall theological findings in the previous chapter imply that spiritual formation is a journey of faith community: called to participate, encourage, and equip one another so as to come to the fullness of maturity in Christ and become a testimony to the kingdom. This transformation toward Christlikeness is made possible by the grace of the

resurrected Jesus as the church encounters the presence of God through various means of grace. It is this lifelong encounter of God's presence that allows the church to grow and mature as a whole and as individuals. This truth should prompt the church to consciously, intentionally, and habitually enter into the presence of God who in his love calls all his people to a life of journey with him that moves through the stages of growth and culminates in wholeness in Christ. Understanding faith as a journey can direct a faith community to become aware not only of one's stage in the journey but also how one grows in faith. This awareness creates a desire and a need for growth. The church then shapes itself appropriately to support and encourage each member for continuous growth.

The Holy Spirit is God's presence for and between the people that empower them with awareness and gifts to sustain and equip each other. Thus, the church must create a space to openly engage in conversation about faith to encourage one another in order to sustain their intent for growth and to urge each other to listen and be attentive to the Spirit's voice in all aspects of life. The growth and sustenance should lead to a purposeful participation and submission toward a role that helps to equip members and build up the church. Such participation is the true culmination of spiritual formation and actualization of one's maturity of faith. In addition, the church's participation in the mission means first and foremost its centripetal work to shape its identity to be a Spirit-led people called and gathered to equip one another.

In growing toward Christlikeness then, following three practices need to be constantly and simultaneously active to nurture holistic spiritual formation of a faith community. First, the church needs to understand the biblical concept of spiritual formation in which the presence of God is the foundation and meditative prayer is the

basis of all formative practice. For this reason, meditative prayer will be learned, practiced, and integrated into the ongoing community life. Secondly, in order to sustain the intention and pursuit of spiritual growth, a practice of encouragement needs to be embodied by all members of the faith community. This practice will be done by a method of peer coaching, which cultivates a posture of mutual submission and a habit of listening to the Holy Spirit. Lastly, a corporate effort for growth should motivate members of the church to realize and embrace their gifts to participate in leadership roles to equip others. Particularly critical to this effort is changing the perspective of leadership in the church as a formative practice. I suggest fivefold gifting as the most precious resource for the church's journey into post-Christendom that would unleash a significant renewal in its life, foster interdependency among the members, and equip God's people for the mission.

The goal of this doctoral project is to challenge the implicit issues within Lifelight by participating in the Spirit's work to transform the church into a true body of Christ. Embracing these theological implications and practicing holistic, corporate formation hope to counter those issues that are derivative of the postmodern culture that is privatized, individualistic, anti-religion, and noncommittal. At the same time, such communal formation satisfies the desire of millennials who seek tradition, spirituality, self-growth, and peer feedback. The preferred future for Lifelight is then for the faith community to come into unity by actively loving one another and pursuing the common goal of spiritual growth by encouraging one another.

Goals

It is necessary for this ministry initiative to establish attainable and measurable goals to provide direction and to gauge the overall effectiveness of the project. However, the challenge associated with spiritual formation, particularly for an inception of ministry that is just beginning to adapt spiritual practices, is that the results are often long-term and difficult to measure objectively, if at all. Yet the theological investigation in the previous chapters affirms the need and importance of this initiative as the vision not only for Lifelight but also as to how the church ought to be. Thus, the hope for this project is to at least start moving the community toward the direction of holistic, communal formation. Given these considerations, the goals listed below assume implicit results by assessing explicit activities.

Understand Corporate Spiritual Formation

The first goal in this ministry initiative is to understand spiritual formation of a faith community. This means that members of the church will come to understand first and foremost that God's presence is the foundation of spiritual formation. They will have a clear understanding of terminologies referenced within the practicum of spiritual formation and key principles including its goal, purpose, and process, that will help to frame the practice and protect its essence. It will be important to introduce this ministry initiative as a community-wide learning and practice to convey that spiritual formation is for all followers of Jesus whom God has called to a lifelong journey with him. The outward manifestation of this goal would be an openness toward spiritual formation and the understanding of its underlying process as collaborative, intentional, and

habit-forming participation. Such understanding of spiritual formation within its teleological purview is crucial to see how each of three practices fits and moves from awareness for formation, intent for growth, sustenance through the activity of encouragement to participation in a role of leadership by fivefold gifting.

Locate One's Faith in Journey

The second goal is to locate one's faith in the stages of spiritual journey. Participants in the retreat will receive tools to help them reflect on their spiritual journey so far, analyze their liturgical elements, and locate their stages of growth. The community will also come to understand how one is formed and why spiritual practice is vital for spiritual growth of the community as a whole and as individuals. These activities will serve as a gateway to invite the members of the church into this ministry initiative by helping them realize the need for growth and stimulating a desire for spiritual practice and the support from the community. The church as a whole will also realize the spectrum of maturity of members within the community, identifying together the need and challenge to grow communally. This understanding will lead the church to engage in the practice of meditative prayer and encouragement.

Understand and Practice Meditative Prayer

The third goal is to understand meditative prayer as the basis of spiritual formation. Lifelight will intently engage in prayer as the underlying posture to notice and submit to the presence of God. Members will come to understand prayer life as an indicator of their depth of relationship with God and gauge their own stage in prayer life by using the tools provided and through discussions. Various types of meditative prayer

will be integrated into weekly gatherings to form a culture within the community that consciously, intentionally, and habitually enter into the presence of God. The gathered time of worship on Sunday will move toward engaging the reverent presence of God while moving away from being an audience. Through these liturgical activities of the church, the community will develop an inner life that results in an outwardly transformed lifestyle of being awakened to the presence of God with greater awareness of oneself. Furthermore, the community will continuously seek to create space for intentional growth in Christ by facilitating an ongoing and consistent participation in other means of grace.

Initiate Peer Coaching

The fourth goal is to begin the practice of encouragement by a method of peer coaching. Having begun the process of formation, it will be important to have a framing practice that sustains the effort for growth, supports each member to work out issues in life, and protects formational practices from becoming theoretical and programmatic. The outward manifestation of this goal would be the participants' continuous engagement in spiritual practices, deepened relationship with other participants, increased effort to listen to the Holy Spirit for decisions in life, heightened awareness of liturgies, and constant recalibration of the *telos* of life. This goal only anticipates the participation of selected leaders within this initiative. However, the hope in going forward is that the activity of encouragement among the leaders will be caught by the rest of the church to learn and imitate them. In addition, the church will come to understand the principles of coaching when it is introduced to the rest of the church and practiced during a summer retreat. The projected outcome may look as follows: I begin coaching relationships with three

selected leaders of the church; those leaders will begin coaching up to three other leaders/members within two years; in four years, people in coaching relationships will have multiplied to include most, if not all, members of the community. While this practice will flourish organically, I will loosely arrange and maintain a web of coaching relationships in the community. In sum, the practice of encouragement aims to invite the community to encounter the Spirit's work in the fellowship of believers, create a culture that sustains intentional growth and deepen relationships among the members.

Participate in Leadership by Fivefold Gifting

The fifth goal is to initiate participation in leadership based on fivefold gifting. This goal expects the members of the community to begin outwardly expressing their growth in faith while being inwardly transformed by participating in a role that equips others in the community as the Spirit enables them. It also hopes to ingrain the purpose of spiritual formation - the mission of God in the service of others rather than self-interest of growth - as the ongoing liturgy of the community. Out of this liturgy and culture, the idea of eventual participation in the centripetal mission becomes a natural advancement within spiritual growth and forms the understanding of leadership as a part of the faith journey for all believers. Within the time frame of this initiative, however, it would not be realistic to see this intention come to fruition. What may be possible to achieve, however, is for the essence of leadership to be unlearned from a hierarchical, positional authoritative clergy model and relearned into a formative practice that first extends inward for the community by fivefold gifting, and then outward toward the secular space. In short, the desired outcome of participation in fivefold gifting is to begin creating a new

liturgy for a role of leadership that the whole community can imagine and pursue as an in-working mission to build the body of Christ.

The Content of the Ministry

The content for instituting corporate spiritual formation at Lifelight involves various introductory learning sessions and initial practices. For the purpose of organization and flow, this content is divided into four parts. Part one introduces spiritual formation. Part two entails various meditative prayers that will be practiced at first during a retreat and then integrated into weekly gatherings. Part three provides principles for peer coaching as the intended practice of encouragement. Lastly, part four proposes the fivefold gifting for participation in equipping roles within the community. Because this ministry initiative only serves as an entry step for the further development and engagement in spiritual formation and is intended for all members of the church, it is essential to produce content that is simple to follow and easy to engage, regardless of one's spiritual maturity and intelligence. The distribution of this content will become clear in the following chapter.

Part One: Introduction of Spiritual Formation

The content for introducing spiritual formation primarily involves key principles that are foundational for this ministry initiative as well as for the church's continuing, deeper engagement in the future. The following principles also insinuate intentions behind each practice in this initiative. To begin, the definition of spiritual formation by Mulholland is most appropriate and helpful for this project: "a process of being

conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”¹ This definition provides a wider purview for a holistic understanding of spiritual formation that corresponds to the full scope of this ministry initiative and helps the members of the community perceive its purpose and goal.

There are seven principles of spiritual formation. First, the goal of spiritual formation is a transformed life. In other words, the end product of spiritual formation is a growth in maturity “to the measure of the full stature of Christ,” that changes the way people live, think, and act (Eph 4:13). This is unlike the secular spirituality that operates within a unifying concept of being an end in itself, or a means to self-discovery or self-healing. Christian spirituality ultimately seeks to receive the grace of Jesus and reclaim the true self to live an abundant life (Jn 10:10). Over-simplifying spiritual formation to this goal alone, however, can make it individualistic, self-centered, and privatized. The addition of the following principles, therefore, not only guards against such inclinations but also promotes the corporate essence of spiritual formation.

Secondly, spiritual formation is essentially about placing oneself before God to be transformed by God. While secular spirituality searches for a divinity, a certain mindset, a way to harness the energy within, or a path to harmony, Christian spirituality encounters God who is already known by his revelation in the Bible and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, all formative activities begin with the intent to encounter and engage the living God. A means of grace is then any practice or ritual in which a person intentionally places oneself in the presence of God. Consequently,

¹ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 39.

spiritual formation first and foremost requires a learning to notice God.² The foremost occasion to notice God is the Sabbath, as the community of believers enter in to stop and quiet themselves long enough to notice, submit, and respond to God's presence.

Subsequently, the third principle is that the principal site for spiritual formation is around the living Word of God and the table of the Lord. Reading the Bible is not just an intellectual exercise to simply acquire information. It is a formative activity that involves meditative reading and forms the reader to the image of God. For this reason, spiritual formation must take place within a Christian community for support and accountability. Smith emphasizes repeatedly that spiritual formation "radiates from, and is nourished by, the worship life of the congregation gathered around Word and Table."³ This principle will be active in the integration of meditative prayer into weekly gatherings, specifically during the Sunday gathering of Word and Table service.

Fourth, in spiritual formation, the triune God is the host and sole provider. This principle points out that while people are involved in spiritual formation, they are never in charge. Rather, people are completely dependent on Christ who is always the host.⁴ This also recognizes that God, not a leader nor a program, is the forming agent and the source of transformation. Spiritual formation is not about doing but being in a relationship with God through Christ. The Holy Spirit is the empowering agent that opens people's eyes to Christ who is present to them and to the others they meet. The triune God is the giver of gifts given to the church to equip and strengthen each other (1 Cor

² Peace, *Noticing God*, 63-64.

³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 1107-1108.

⁴ Peterson, *Living the Resurrection*, 740.

12:28; Rom 12; Eph 4:7-8). As participants in spiritual formation, their part is to offer themselves to God in ways that enable God to carry out his work of grace. Thus, spiritual formation can be neither set up nor forced through a specially prepared context, a charismatic leader, or a well-organized conference. This principle essentially means that God meets his people in the seemingly ordinary routine of life as the Spirit gifts them with the awareness to notice and attend to God's presence through the ordinary means of grace. The importance of this principle will echo in the practice of encouragement, fellowship, and furthermore, leadership based on fivefold gifting.

Fifth, spiritual formation is for everyone, seekers and believers like. Spiritual formation is not a spiritual frill, a quest for deeper life in Christ, or a spiritual fad for trendy Christians. It is not only for the dedicated, the particularly pious, the elite, the mature, or those who have the time or inclination. Instead, all are invited to spiritual formation to grow Christlike and live an abundant life with God, and, at the same time, move away from being religious consumers. In fact, spiritual formation is not an option; it is an unavoidable, primal reality of human existence.⁵ In one way or another, either toward Christ or idols, everyone is in a process of formation at all times. Indeed, the human heart is oriented toward some end that all people live toward, a *telos*, its loves and longings.⁶ For this reason, spiritual formation invites all people to declare that their soul is their work, and Christ has enabled and empowered all people to boldly approach him

⁵ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 130-132.

⁶ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 211.

(Heb 4:16). This principle will be reiterated as all three spiritual practices of prayer, encouragement, and leadership invite participation of all members in the church.

The sixth principle is that spiritual formation is a lifelong journey with recognizable stages of growth. Spiritual growth is, to a certain measure, patterned on the nature of physical growth. Simply put, as one's spiritual virtues identify one's spiritual maturity, one's faith can be identified in various stages of spiritual formation.⁷ While there may be spurts of growth, spiritual maturity takes a lifetime, and grows slowly. Essentially, this process of growth involves not only doing the formational exercises but also realizing secular liturgies that are de-formative, installing counter-formative Christian liturgies, and building habits that shape the heart toward the kingdom of God. Each stage of spiritual formation presents a natural progress of the journey from searching for God or a deeper meaning in life, discovering and pursuing to live in God's reality, doubting and rediscovering God during an inevitable crisis, and then to finally surrendering and imitating perfect love.⁸ These stages of the journey will become clearer when the participants engage in discovering their own faith journey and their current stage of growth during the retreat. Consequently, understanding the nature of spiritual formation as a growth and identifying one's place in the journey will be critical to foster a desire to engage in spiritual formation.

Lastly, the purpose of a transformed life through spiritual formation is to live a missional life. In other words, spiritual formation is ultimately for the sake of others. In

⁷ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 356-359.

⁸ See Table 1.

fact, the doctrine of holiness in the Wesleyan tradition requires not a withdrawal from the world but rather a kind of participation in God's work in and through the church. There is a desperate need for many Christians today to embrace the spiritual growth that takes place in the midst of relationships with others, not apart from them. To that account, a good litmus test of spiritual growth can be done simply by examining the nature and quality of one's relationships with others as loving, compassionate, patient, understanding, forgiving, and caring (2 Thes 1:3). This final principle, along with the theological study in the previous chapter, defends why this ministry initiative cannot exist without the stage of actualization of growth toward participation in an equipping role within the faith community before living missionally outward.

Part Two: Meditative Prayer

At the heart of spiritual formation is prayer. While there are different types of prayers such as intercessory, petition and meditation, this project is primarily concerned with meditative prayer in a corporate setting. Mark Thibodeaux in *Armchair Mystic* frames prayer most pertinent to spiritual formation: a recognition of God, a transformation by God, and a union with God.⁹ This means, in prayer, Christians submit to the presence of God, and, in that submissive posture, are transformed as they release their hold on false selves. As prayer becomes a habitual practice and one matures in faith, prayer becomes simply an enjoyment of union with God. Thibodeaux is also helpful by describing prayer as an indicator of relational depth. He portrays prayer life in four stages,

⁹ Mark S. J. Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic: Easing into Contemplative Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011), Kindle: 152-158. My paraphrase.

comparing it to a child's maturing relationship with an aunt, and parallels one's stage in prayer life with one's depth of relationship with God.¹⁰ Table 1 shows the intersection of Thibodeaux's stages in prayer life with the author's stages in the journey of faith. As one progresses in prayer life, each form of prayer joins newly learned prayer and is repeatedly practiced throughout the life of a believer.

Table 1. Stages of faith and prayer stages

Journey of Faith	
Prayer Life	1. Search Faith is discovering God (A sense of awe, search for greater meaning in life, awareness of destructive habits)
	2. Discovery Faith is learning about God (A hunger to learn & discover self, a sense of belonging, search for answers, desire to fill needs)
	3. Commitment Faith is working for God (Life in community, participation in productive service, a sense of responsibility, hyper-vigilant)
	4. Crisis Faith is rediscovering God (Loss of certainties in life and faith, a search for direction and renewed understanding)
	5. Surrender Faith is surrendering to God (A renewed sense of God's acceptance, grace, and certainty in God, a deep calm & stillness)
	6. Communion Faith is reflecting God (A sense of wholeness in Christ, union with God, see God in all of life, a love of self for God)
1. Learning to Talk (at God) (Written prayers, psalms, songs, hymns)	
2. Learning to Talk to God (Petition, intercession, journaling, prayer walk)	
3. Learning to Listen (to God) (Solitude, meditative prayer, <i>Examen</i> , <i>Lectio divina</i>)	
4. Being with God (Contemplation)	

In stage 1, written prayers and psalms are the fitting form of prayer in which one begins to come to an awareness of God (faith stage 1) and learns to verbalize who God is and how to respond to this God. In this stage, what people say is not as important as the

¹⁰ Ibid., 17-30.

expression of their intent to be in a relationship with God.¹¹ Written prayers are the precious liturgy from Christian heritage given from the Spirit to the church, richly provided in the *Book of Common Prayer* and other traditions. Praise songs and hymns are also a form of written prayer and valuable. As Augustine said, “to sing is to pray twice.”¹²

In stage 2, as Christians grow in their desire for God and pursue a new life of faith (faith stage 2), they realize that God invites them to talk to him using their own words.¹³ Prayers in this stage is commonly known to most Christians as having a conversation with God. They are mostly a simple prayer of petition and intercession. In this stage, the relationship with God is at an immature, self-occupied level where one's love of God is for self, hardly recognizing the presence of God and others. Christians in this stage are still unsure of how to express anger, frustration, and doubt, and tend to censure themselves.¹⁴ However, an apparent growth in faith begins to assure them that God accepts them to engage him where they are.

Subsequently, a further growth of commitment in the pursuit of God (faith stage 3), often triggered by a shift in one's agenda from being self-centered to God-centered, and from the need of self to God's mission, leads to a deeper growth in prayer life to stage 3.¹⁵ Through the invested time and effort, there is now knowledge and trust in God. The language of God - the Word, imagination, emotion, and conversation with fellow

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹² Ibid., 58.

¹³ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵ Ibid., 73.

Christians - also becomes more recognizable. Essentially, Christians in this stage are now open to listening to the Holy Spirit. Listening is a sign of maturity where one no longer remains as the center of one's attention and becomes aware of the presence of others. The maturity to listen in prayer coincides with the growth toward sacrificial and missional living and becomes a prerequisite to overcome an inevitable crisis of faith (faith stage 4) by rediscovering God. Thus, one cannot go beyond stage 3 in the faith journey without having this ability and willingness to listen in prayer.

Prayer in this stage involves solitude and meditation to which this project devotes a bulk of attention. It is necessary to clarify first that unlike a common misconception, meditation is not emptying one's mind to become mindless and void or daydreaming with random, undisciplined thoughts and images. Christian meditation is precisely the opposite: actively engaging and concentrating on God using images and words from Christian liturgies.¹⁶ For that reason, meditative prayer first requires an exercise to drown out noises and focus to listen. Praying can be difficult because the mind often wanders off with distractions. These noises - noise of need (food, tasks), noise of body (uncomfortable, cold, tired), noise of relationships, and noise of pain and suffering (worry, hurt) - are usually suppressed or ignored until, seemingly, one stops to slow down in silence to pray. Thus, the first challenge of meditative prayer is to get comfortable with silence, which requires practice. By overcoming the noises, one can enter into solitude. However, solitude is not just silence alone although silence of some sort is necessary. Rather, solitude is an intentional readiness to enter a focused state of mind. This means

¹⁶ Richard Peace, *Meditative Prayer: Entering God's Presence* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 11.

that one can have solitude alone in a room and also when in a crowd. Solitude is required for meditative prayer and reading of the Word. Solitude is not a prayer but what gets one into various types of prayer by using exercises to slow down and focus the mind on God. Centering prayer is the most common method used to help the mind to focus on God by repeating a simple phrase like “my God, my Lord,” or “Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Practicing silence and solitude will be the first step when the community engages in meditative prayer at the retreat.

Once the church practices solitude, there are three types of meditative prayer to engage in this initiative. The first is the prayer of Examen. The prayer of Examen has been the primary form of prayer, performed twice a day, by the Jesuits, founded in the sixteenth century by Saint Ignatius.¹⁸ The purpose of this prayer is to find God in all things by a method of recollection to draw out meanings from each activity of the day.¹⁹ Originally, the Examen had five steps: gratitude, awareness of sins, review, forgiveness, and grace.²⁰ The typical contemporary version, however, has been reduced to three steps of reviewing the previous day by processing first with gratitude, then with the awareness of God’s presence, and finally with confession. In sum, the prayer of Examen is a vital tool for Christians to pay attention to life with a spirit of gratitude, awareness, and humility.

¹⁷ Peace, *Meditative Prayer*, 19.

¹⁸ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (San Francisco, HarperCollins, 2010), Kindle: 87.

¹⁹ Peace, *Noticing God*, 301.

²⁰ Martin, *The Jesuit Guide*, 95.

Another important meditative prayer for corporate formation is *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina*, along with the daily offices of prayer, is a tradition from the Benedictine community, the Order of Saint Benedict, to help shape and support one's search for God and foster the awareness of God's presence in the Word.²¹ It comprises four elements: *lectio* (reading the text), *meditatio* (meditating or reflecting on the text), *oratio* (praying the text), and *contemplatio* (living or obeying the text).²² These four elements overlap and intermingle in a circular rather than a linear way in which they are repeated in various sequences and configurations. Practicing *lectio divina* means a believer is not simply reading the text with the mind only but also deeply praying with the heart to encounter God in the Scripture and empowering the Word to become a way of living. When reading a narrative passage in the Gospel, *lectio divina* can be coupled with a method of imaginative reading called Ignatian contemplation which helps the reader to reflect deeply into the story in the Gospel by imagining oneself in it. Essentially, the reader becomes a secondhand witness and is led to a deep encounter with Jesus. Both *lectio divina* and Ignatian contemplation will be practiced during the retreat and integrated into community life.

Lastly, the community will begin experimenting with imaginative prayers. Imagination moves people beyond facts and ideas, the seeming realities. While it may be difficult to initially accept imagination as a prayer, in truth, all prayers, as well as understanding and ideas, are in the mind, for this is the way God created the human being.

²¹ Peace, *Noticing God*, 658-659.

²² Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 1037-1048; Foster, *Life with God*, 63.

Imagination is a powerful tool for formative practices. In fact, spiritual formation is essentially a formation of one's imagination.²³ For this reason, the primary objective for liturgies in the church is to produce an imaginative Christian experience.²⁴ Thus, imaginative prayer is not just imagining things but seeing and hearing through an imagination the things of God and truer realities in life. The community will practice simple imaginative prayers during the retreat by imagining a conversation with Jesus in various settings.

Finally, in the fourth and final stage of prayer where the relationship with God reaches its highest maturity (faith stage 5 and 6), prayer becomes a union with God - a contemplation. In this stage, relationship and commitment are unmistakable, and being present with God is more important than any activities.²⁵ In contemplation, the mind is absent from thoughts and images yet focused on God to simply rest in him.²⁶ This does not mean that contemplative prayer is static. Rather, it is active while the focus is shifted from activities either of oneself or God, to how one is formed out of prayer.²⁷ To reach this relational state and constant practice of contemplation, one must be well-experienced in the things of the Spirit.²⁸ Unlike other stages in prayer life, one cannot learn the activities in this stage, for there are none.

²³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 1464-1465.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic*, 27.

²⁶ Peace, *Meditative Prayer*, 11.

²⁷ Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic*, 28.

²⁸ Peace, *Meditative Prayer*, 49.

Two principles will be important for the church while engaging in meditative prayer. First, it is crucial to remember that when it comes to prayer, everyone is a beginner. In fact, there is no learning of how to pray or how to become a master of it. Therefore, the second principle must be applied: the only task in prayer for Christians is to open up for God's presence to transform them. In fact, prayer is not something they do but something God does to them. Thus, it is important to be reminded that the goal of meditative prayer is to be with God which is only possible by God. In that sense, all activities of spiritual formation are prayer. If so, the way that Christians approach meditative prayer becomes the posture in spiritual formation that encompasses all activities of the community. Essentially, meditative prayer is the way in which the community will "live and move and have [their] being" (Acts 17:28).

Part Three: Coaching

A practice of encouragement is crucial for binding and sustaining the church's intention for growth and continuing its active engagement in spiritual practice. It also ensures that no one gets left behind just going through the motion of spiritual practice and neglect growth. This is how a covenant community must live: encouraging one another, partnering in new habits and rhythm of life, and keeping each other accountable. Holistic spiritual formation moves beyond an abstract idea of being formed in the presence of God, having it compartmentalized for a spiritual part of life, and extends to life as a whole. Therefore, an ongoing conversation for encouragement among the members of a body of Christ must extend to all facets of life. For this reason, this initiative employs a method of

peer coaching. Both terms, (peer) coaching and (practice of) encouragement, are therefore used interchangeably.

Peer coaching is a simple, organic, relational approach to encourage spiritual development in a way that corresponds to empowerment of and dependency on the Holy Spirit. It is easily duplicated and accessible to anyone. Peer coaching can be explained simply as intentionally meeting with another in the community and asking questions about one's spiritual growth. On the other hand, it can also be a complex undertaking with elaborate training, steps, forms, and structures. This practice may eventually come to such complex form and structure in the future and will benefit from a formal training by experts. For now, it is sufficient to keep it simple while providing necessary resources to initial participants. As it will be explained further in the following chapter, the scope of this practice within this project is to initiate it with selected leaders. Encouragement is a sort of activity that is best to be embraced, caught rather than taught, as part of the habitual culture of the church.²⁹

Three principles will be presented to maintain the essence of peer coaching. These principles also imply the goals and the purpose of the practice. First, coaching is not merely a human activity but an activity of God. It may even be said that to coach is to pray together. Most importantly, unlike a mentor, a coach - especially the one who is a peer, nearly equal in maturity and experience - does not depend on one's own knowledge and experience but rather the wisdom, thought process, and work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the key posture in the practice of encouragement for both the coach and the coached is to

²⁹ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 411.

be attentive and submissive to the work of the Holy Spirit. Such posture acknowledges and trusts two fundamental concepts of coaching. First, people can come up with answers if they are given enough time to focus, process, and sort out options. Coaching is about encouraging someone to make their own decisions and to think for themselves. In other words, it is to come alongside someone to help them figure out issues of faith and life by listening to the Holy Spirit. Secondly, growth in faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of one's own. A coach only plays a supporting role to listen, ask questions, and listen more.³⁰ Overall, a coach simply acts as a sounding board for questions and helps the coached process options.³¹ For this reason, in coaching conversation, a coach has only four tasks: clarify, ask questions, exhaust, and keep the golden rule: do not tell people something they can discover on their own.³²

Second, it is crucial to engage this practice not as a program but rather as a relational activity. Programs do not cultivate relationship and personal development to help people grow. Jesus did not run discipleship programs or hosted conferences. His work was based on personal relationships with those who followed him. Coaching, as an incarnational practice, prompts its participants to first build relationship and then earn the right to be heard. For this reason, coaches do not pick, find, or choose whom to coach. Rather, they realize to whom they must commit in relationship by spending time in prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit guiding them to whom God places in their lives to serve in a

³⁰ Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2003), 33.

³¹ Ibid., 37.

³² Ibid., 54.

coaching relationship. This is the very first step of coaching, which reinvigorates the aforementioned first principle. Coaches meet the coached where they are, not only geographically but also socially, economically and spiritually. In this way, coaches extend *shalom*, reaching out to serve and not to be served. Coaches spend the first few meetings deepening the relationship by asking questions beyond mere small talk. People do not know each other until they are engaged in deep, intentional conversation that reveals themselves in a vulnerable way, specifically about their desires and struggles. Coaching without the relational element is ineffective at best. Relationship is what gives power to coaching. Thus, the focus within this practice is and always will be about the coach and the coached who spend time in dialogue to deepen their relationship.

Third, any member of the church can both be a coach and be coached. The simplicity of this practice allows any person to engage in a coaching relationship without being burdened and fearful. However, while coaching is something anyone can do, not everyone may be fit to help others as a coach within certain seasons of one's life or one's current conditions. Nonetheless, most people, despite their reservation, may be more ready and capable to coach than they think. Also, the practice of encouragement does not limit the activity to believers but allows not-yet believers to participate. This means when realizing whom to coach, a coach does not overlook those who are not yet following Jesus but anyone who is relationally connected, spiritually open, and willing to dialogue. Such wide susceptibility of the practice allows the church to accept and practice the belief that everyone is capable to help equip those in the community. Essentially, this simple practice of encouragement denies the common notion that discipleship begins with mature Christians. This final principle reinforces the previous two principles that state

coaching is an activity of encouragement that anyone can do within a relationship with another through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In sum, coaching is not about having gone the journey, having all the right answers, or holding a position of authority. Rather, a coach is simply a guide to help the coached engage in deeper thinking, be goal oriented, and reach their potential, all by being attentive and submissive to the Spirit. The goal, therefore, is to help every member of the community grow as followers of Jesus in their own, unique way that God calls and shapes them. Coaches do not shape the coached. They simply help them to see how the Holy Spirit is shaping them.

Part Four: Fivefold Gifting

Being formed into Christlike stature is to desire what God desires: his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10). Hence, the church's participation in the mission means to be a Spirit-led people called and gathered to equip one another. This wider purview of spiritual formation encompasses an actualization of growth which is a pathway toward fulfilling the purpose of formation as a faith community that bears witness to a missional God and his redemptive purpose in the world. While being missional has centrifugal and centripetal pursuits, both of which are aspects of the church's participation in the *missio Dei*, this project is focused on the centripetal aspect of the mission - a participation in the internal endeavor of the mission. The call of the church to equip one another to Christlikeness is to become a witness to the kingdom that proclaims how God's people live in loving harmony (Jn 13:35). This role of equipping God's people is provided not only by a position of given structure of the church as an

organized entity but more so by the gifts given from the Spirit of God. These gifts are bestowed in the following list of roles: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, commonly known as fivefold gifting (Eph 4:11). The purpose of the gift is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” and the goal is for “all of us [to] come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:12, 13).

There are three key principles for participation in the ministry of equipping. First, God gifts all his people. As with the other two practices, this first principle embraces the truth that God calls and anoints all his people as opposed to just a select few (1 Peter 2:9). It honors God-given authority and ordination of all people to lead and serve the church in one’s full intention and potential. The priesthood of all believers is the ultimate actualization of a faith community to not merely believe the gospel but to become the gospel as a body of Christ, and in so doing, participate in the very life and mission of God.

Each gift within the fivefold gifting is unique. Some may realize the gift of apostleship that looks outward to call the community to move beyond its local setting and extend the kingdom perspective for the mission. Others may realize the gift of prophesy that reveals the truth and call of God into a situation, firmly but gently speaking for the hopes of transformation, especially of injustice and neglect of the poor, from a deep-seated, covenantal love for God’s people.³³ Still, some may find a great satisfaction in being instrumental in helping someone in any stage of the journey move closer to Jesus.

³³ Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 2336.

Theirs is the gift of evangelism. Some may incline toward helping those who are hurting (pastors), and some may display the gift of teaching that helps communicate the revealed wisdom of God so that the people learn how to obey all that Christ has commanded them.³⁴ In the practice of fivefold gifting, every person comes to realize their gift as they mature in faith. Even in the early stage of the journey, there may be indicators to help one discover one's gift by engaging in questionnaires and assessments. One's gift within fivefold gifting may be realized by an individual or by the community, but, one's gift is, and should always be, affirmed and celebrated by a faith community.

Second, all gifts are equal within fivefold gifting. This principle prescribes to a mutual participation and submission of all members. It is not enough to just participate but to form virtues by habituating the right posture to submit not only to the work of the Spirit but to one another's voices that echo the Spirit's. Such posture overcomes individualism and disunity caused by seniority, maturity, socioeconomic class, education, gender, or age. Instead, it invites all "not to think [themselves] more highly than [they] ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Rom 12:3). This principle, coupled with the first principle, simply states that no one is exempt and exceptional. The equality of all gifts demands interdependence instead of independence. Recognizing and admitting to a specific gift for oneself is to also deny other gifts, affirm them in others, and thus, depend on others. For example, evangelists are often not best fitted to teach, and teachers usually tend to be terrible pastors. Thus, there is a need to separate yet equally acknowledge each gift. The

³⁴ Ibid.

church then grows toward trusting the Spirit rather than charisma, experience or knowledge of individuals, and allows for the equipping of the community in accordance with the character of the role shaped by the gift that is received rather than positions that are taken. Ultimately, participating in the mission with the equality of all gifts allows submission to a higher source of authority, namely the lordship of Christ, and acknowledges the need for the communion of the Spirit.

Finally, all gifts are equally needed in fivefold gifting. This third principle enjoins the previous two principles in identifying not only the unique contribution of each gift to the church but also the need for the equal presence of every gift for the church. When all gifts are not equally present and certain gift dominates, a serious dysfunction inevitably occurs in the church.³⁵ For example, if apostolic leaders dominate, the church tends to become autocratic under constant pressure for change and development that leaves people overworked and wounded.³⁶ When prophets dominate, the church can be one-dimensional, have an overly spiritual vibe, or unsustainable activism.³⁷ If evangelistic leaders dominate, the church may have an obsession with numerical growth, create dependence on charismatic leadership, and lack theological depth. The dominance of pastor and/or teacher is most identifiable in the existing dysfunction within the Christendom church in North America, being either ideological, doctrine-obsessed,

³⁵ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), Kindle: 2051

³⁶ Ibid, 2057.

³⁷ Ibid., 2061.

moralistic, and rigid (teacher), or risk-averse, needy, and lacking creativity (pastor).³⁸

Therefore, each gift within fivefold gifting must be equally present to inform and shape all aspects of the church by every gift, being fit, healthy, and mature for Christ's mission.

While there will be a deeper integration of fivefold gifting into the organizational structure of the church in the future, the initial practice will be facilitated during a monthly community meal time called Open Table. The goal of Open Table is to make a space for interactions and intentional conversation between the members and to exercise fivefold gifting. There are three components to this meeting. First, it will encourage the participants to engage in conversation about their personal lives to deepen relationships. The hope for such fellowship is to experience God and each other in reconciled relationships, sharing all things in common in Christ (Acts 2:44). Second, the meeting will include a slot of time for each member to take a turn and share an extensive detail of their background and life now. Finally, the facilitator of the meeting will raise specific questions about faith, social issues, or affairs within the community and identify and invite those with an affirmed gift to participate by using their specific gifts. The hope is to embrace disputes, issues, and conflicts as opportunities for the faith community to grow in Christ, and, in practicing the communion of the Spirit and fivefold gifting, patiently discern the way forward.

³⁸ Ibid., 2065-2069.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

This chapter describes the implementation process of the ministry initiative which introduces the members of Lifelight to the principles of spiritual formation and integrates the practices of meditative prayer, encouragement, and fivefold gifting as ongoing activities of the community. The intent for this initiative is to help the community become intentional about spiritual growth and to overcome the differences by uniting in the Spirit of God and for his mission. This chapter also includes a timeline for the development and implementation of the project and additional resources needed to conduct the project. This chapter also offers an overview of the assessment plan to determine the effectiveness of the project.

Implementation Timeline and Resource

The timeline of the new ministry initiative includes five phases. The first phase introduces the community to spiritual formation and stages of growth. The second phase involves initial testing and setting up the practice of encouragement by coaching selected leaders. The third phase focuses on introducing meditative prayer and integrating it into

the ongoing gatherings of the church. The fourth phase invites the whole community to the practice of encouragement. Finally, the fifth phase introduces fivefold gifting, initiates Open Table, and invites the community to affirm the gifts of selected members of the church.

Resources for the project are developed prior to each phase and introduced to the leadership team beforehand (except for phase two). As the facilitating pastor, I have prepared all written materials for the exercises and handbooks unless noted otherwise. The implementation will generally happen during the summer retreat. Evaluation and analysis will follow after each phase. This project requires no particular budget other than what is already constituted for the regular church activities including the expenditures for retreats and pastoral care.

Phase 1: Spiritual Formation and Stages of Growth

In August 2016, the first phase of the project began during the church's annual retreat. Rather than introducing spiritual formation through a teaching series, it began with the members participating in exercises that helped them to discover their spiritual history and where they are in their spiritual journeys. This was done with two resources provided: "Creating Your Post-It Note Timeline" by Leader BreakThru and a questionnaire to discern one's spiritual state that I have formulated.¹ The Post-It Note Timeline exercise helped the members to reflect on their past and how their faith has been impacted by various events and people in their lives. The questionnaire helped the members to assess their faith by reflecting on their spiritual goals, achievements, and

challenges in growing. An introduction of the stages in spiritual journey accompanied a printed handout that describes six stages of the faith journey, its characteristics, and its challenges. The members were then divided into small groups to discuss each other's findings of their current stages in the journey. The intention to create the need and desire for spiritual growth was met at the end of this portion of the retreat. Many voiced their surprise of realizing where they are in the journey and how much further they can grow. Subsequently, the last portion of the retreat presented the answer to their desire for growth by introducing spiritual formation, its principles, the process of growth, and the future plan. Many members voiced their desire to learn how to pray when asked what they most wanted to learn. The retreat concluded by emphasizing the need for awareness of one's spiritual maturity, the intent for growth, and openness for conversation. This set the stage for the next phase.

The venue for the retreat was a large estate which allowed for communal living. The resources for the exercises were post-it notes, a whiteboard, pens, and notebooks. Written materials and handouts included revised instructions for Creating Your Post-It Timeline, the questionnaire for spiritual assessment, and the description of stages in spiritual journey.

Phase 2: Introduction of Coaching for Selected Leaders

Following phase one, I began meeting individually with three selected leaders in the community with an intent to introduce them to the practice of encouragement in the method of peer coaching. These leaders are the key people in the community who would

¹ Leader Breakthru, "Your Post-It Note Timeline," accessed November 2, 2014,

willingly participate, quickly learn how to coach, and responsibly promote the practice. This preliminary stage was also to evaluate the receptivity of the coaching method, and practice coaching for myself. I began meeting three leaders where they are: near their home or work, at coffee shops or restaurants. The leaders did not realize initially what was going on except that their pastor was asking them about their spiritual wellness, struggles, decisions in life, and direction of growth. My intention was to exemplify the coaching method so it can be imitated. After a few meetings, I met with all three leaders together for a time of celebration and to unveil the practice. A handout about the coaching relationship was supplied with an explanation that it is what I have been doing in the past few meetings. To formally establish the coaching relationship, I and the leaders committed to certain expectations and goals. The leaders also recognized that already in place for them is a small group for support, learning, and growth by journeying together through the practice of encouragement.

Once the coaching relationship with the initial leaders has been established, I challenged the leaders to realize two to three others that God places in their hearts and to begin their own coaching relationships. I shared with them the vision for the practice of encouragement that will sustain intentional growth and deepen relationships in the community. My coaching relationship with the initial leaders will continue indefinitely. In this phase, the expenditure on meals and beverages during the meetings was shared. Written materials included a guideline for coaching and a list of sample coaching questions.

Phase 3: Introduction and Integration of Meditative Prayer

In the spring of 2017, I began introducing and practicing meditative prayer during the monthly leaders meeting. During the summer retreat in August 2017, following a review and discussion about spiritual growth, I began teaching about prayer life by integrating the stages of spiritual journey with the stages of prayer. The retreat focused on introducing various types of prayer including the prayer of Examen, along with exercises for solitude, and the daily office. Participants were instructed at times to be silent for a specific period of time, having mobile phones and electronic devices collected while continuing to interact with one another, or being alone. The community also engaged in solitude by following the model of Brother Lawrence during each cleaning session (dirty dishes, street cleaning, or other projects) assigned to different participants. The leaders modeled the practice and led in small group exercises. Throughout the retreat, participants were instructed to journal after each activity. Each exercise was practiced first as a group for the purpose of instruction. Then each participant was encouraged to find and settle into a quiet space for individual practice and journaling. The venue for the retreat was a large estate for communal living with access to open space and walking trails. Written materials included instructions for various types of meditative prayer, predominantly borrowed from works by Richard Peace and Mark Thibodeaux.

In the fall of 2017, following the retreat, various types of prayer were integrated into the weekly gatherings of Lifelight. First, meditative prayer has been embedded in the Sunday worship, which is now called Word and Table. A typical Sunday service previously included lectionary readings, songs, and a time of intercessory prayer. The revised program following the retreat has added the following: silent prayer to prepare

the hearts and focus on the presence of God (practicing silence and solitude), reading of the Word (lectionary readings) for attentive listening rather than reading along, shared reflections of the lectionary readings as *lectio divina*, *cirsum corda*, and the prayer of confession followed by a short version of the prayer of Examen for the week. These formative components of meditative prayer have increased the participation of and the focus on the presence of God.

Secondly, the midweek Bible study has been newly structured and named Word and Prayer, combining an inductive study with a meditative reading of the Scripture. Traditionally, Lifelight provided an in-depth study of the Bible, going book by book and verse by verse. Word and Prayer is a balanced approach to the intake of Scripture: a mode of reading the Bible with the purpose of transformation, not information.

Lastly, the community met for a silent retreat in November 2017 and has continued meeting quarterly. The silent retreat focuses on practicing three formational exercises: the prayer of Examen, *lectio divina*, and prayer walks. The purpose is to help rejuvenate the formative practices experienced at the retreat and continually practice them. It is designed to last four hours and is divided into three parts: corporate prayer, individual prayer, and shared reflection. The location can be a retreat center, monastery, or a park where there is a quiet space for the group to come together and also scatter into separate areas. Mobile phones and electronics are collected by the leader.

Phase 4: Expansion of Coaching

As each of the three leaders began coaching some of the members in the community, a church-wide introduction to the practice of encouragement will launch

during the retreat in August 2018. The hope for this launch is that many members have already caught the idea of the practice of encouragement by being with leaders and conversing about their spiritual growth. During the retreat, however, the whole church will learn the principles and theology behind the practice of encouragement. Most critical is reinforcing the importance of intentionality for spiritual growth. The practice will also build for the community a habit of sharing with one another issues of faith and of life. The community will also together learn to listen to the Spirit between the coach and the coached. It will also be important to communicate how anyone can be a coach and be coached. There will be some practice of peer coaching at the retreat with a handout of guideline for the coaching relationship.² The retreat will last for four days over a long weekend at a large estate. Written material will be handouts for coaching that includes a guideline and sample coaching questions, revised from the materials previously given to the leaders.

Following the retreat, the leaders already in coaching relationship with other members of the community will begin encouraging those members to each start coaching others. From that point on, once the culture of encouragement is active with some intentionality, there will only be a need to maintain and nurture the web of peer coaching and protect it from becoming programmatic. There will also be more training for members to not only become coaches but to coach the coach, continuing to provide available resources on coaching that include websites, books, and workshops.

² See Appendix A.

Phase 5: Fivefold Gifting, Affirmation, and Open Table

In the spring of 2018, Lifelight began gathering around Open Table, a community meal with an intent for deep conversation, on every first Sunday of the month. I introduced the practice as a time of fellowship to get to know each other better and deepen friendships. The meal was set up as a potluck brunch at the house in which the church meets. All participants sat together around one long row of connected tables with two candles lit as a symbol of the presence of the risen Christ. I set the table rules. First, participants were asked to put away silenced phones. Second, participants were instructed to only ask questions to another person at the table. This also meant that participants could only speak when answering a question. Third, only one person could speak at a time while everyone listens. These rules are intended to avoid chatter over non-personal topics (sports, movies, etc.), encourage participants to discover more about each other, and prepare/continue the practice of asking questions (coaching).

In the summer of 2019, the practice of fivefold gifting will be introduced at the retreat. In that retreat, an extensive study and meditative reading of Ephesians 4 and other corresponding passages will help to frame the ecclesiology and understanding for participation in the centripetal aspect of the *missio Dei*. After presenting the principles and theology, the participants will engage in questionnaires and profile assessment tests. The community will spend extensive time praying for each member, highlighting their virtues, and discussing each other's possible gift. The community will affirm and celebrate the gifts of existing leaders, including the pastors, and discuss the ways each leader can practice their gifts. I will explain the integration of fivefold gifting for the role of equipping one another in the community, a new paradigm of leadership and structure

that supports the focus of corporate spiritual formation and its practices that the church began engaging in over the past three years, and how realizing, affirming, and practicing fivefold gifting will be integrated at Open Table each month. The retreat will be four days long at a large estate. Written material will include handouts of a study guide for Ephesians 4, description of each of the fivefold gifts, and assessment tests modified from Alan Hirsch's *5Q*.³

Assessment and Evaluation

The assessment and evaluation process involves a survey of faith and feedback procedures in order to measure the ministry initiative. First, an initial survey of a participant's faith at the end of the first phase is used to establish a baseline. This survey is done by marking measurements for categories of attitude, desire, faith, relationship, and virtues including the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a). The same survey is also conducted after each phase. However, evaluating one's spiritual condition and growth is highly subjective, and paradoxical as one's view of faith is drawn according to the person's own maturity of faith. For this reason, the final survey in the fall of 2019 will seek to evaluate not only the participants' growth in faith according to the survey but also their change in attitude, teleological shift toward God, and subtle but recognizable change in virtues. The ultimate evaluation of the project will be to assess if the current issues at Lifelight mentioned in the introduction have been overcome and whether the positive outcome for the community is recognizable.

³ This resource refers to Alan Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* and www.5Qtests.com. Also see Appendix B.

Secondly, each phase is followed by feedback from all the participants using a questionnaire and informal interviews as the primary tools. A questionnaire for feedback is distributed to all adult participants to fill out during a weekly gathering immediately following the retreat or by email to those not in attendance. In addition, a number of participants are selected for a short interview to gather more comprehensive responses that the questionnaire may not provide. Moreover, leaders are given a chance during the leaders' meeting following the retreat to give feedback specifically in regard to the level of, or the enthusiasm in, participation and receptivity of the practice. During the same meeting, all feedback gathered through the questionnaire and recorded from interviews are evaluated and analyzed by the leadership team for any recommendations for refinement and improvement to the next phase of this ministry initiative. I will also compile the responses and share his analysis of the feedback with members of the community at a time of gathering, along with a plan for improvement. This will also allow a time for open discussion for members of the church to share their own evaluations and recommend any changes or the next steps they desire to take.

At the time of this writing in the spring of 2018, the first and second goals for which the participants locate their stage in the journey and learn the critical principles of spiritual formation were attained. Questionnaires and interviews also uncovered that the teaching session and assessment tools have been helpful and that members are motivated to participate in spiritual formation. For the third goal, while initiating peer coaching with selected leaders has begun with positive feedback that indicates acceptance of the practice and desire to move ahead, an evaluation of overall practice with broadened participation is yet unknown. Questionnaires and interviews following the retreat in phase

four will reveal if the participants have obtained a greater awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit, recognize the need for an activity to help sustain their desire for growth, and are open to deepening relationships with other members. The fourth goal of learning and practicing meditative prayer and having it integrated into the ongoing life of the community has been attained. Questionnaires and interviews revealed participants' receptivity to meditative prayer, increased desire for prayer life, and knowledge of which prayers were easy to practice and which were more difficult. For the final goal, feedback will disclose if participants have been motivated effectively to realize their fivefold gifting and are amenable to participating in leadership roles for the *missio Dei*. It is anticipated that the final feedback and responses from all participants will provide valuable insight into the overall receptivity and effectiveness of the project. I am hopeful that the final survey in comparison to previous ones will indicate not only growth in participants' own assessment of faith but also a change, albeit small, in their teleological shift and virtues.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This doctoral project has focused on developing and implementing spiritual formation to counter the implicit issues within the community of Lifelight in San Francisco. The church has slowly become negligent of spiritual growth and unconcerned with wellness, unity, and mission of the church. Also, Lifelight has for some time ignored a brewing tension between its diverse groups of young people. This is likely a result of the changes in the socio-economic profile that have been reshaping San Francisco and the prevalent postmodern culture of individualism, especially among millennials. Yet such changes and differences should be overcome if the community is to converge toward the gospel and has developed Christian virtues. The tension is not explicit but rather expressed with an attitude of indifference and disinterest toward others. On the outside, everyone seems to get along, but that is not enough for a body of Christ, created and called by Jesus. Yet the reality is that this sort of pseudo-community is not unique to Lifelight but prevalent in many churches in the West. Lifelight is but one of many churches that lack any knowledge, inspiration, and imagination for spiritual journey and maturity.

This project proposed three practices to launch Lifelight into the process of communal formation that not only initiates the corporate practice of the presence of God to cultivate a genuine community of young people but also moves the whole church toward the mutual participation in the activity of sustaining and the imagination of equipping others to build the body of Christ. These three practices - meditative prayer, encouragement, and fivefold gifting - may seem disconnected from each other. In fact,

leading and giving encouragement are not typically perceived as formative practices. Against such conventional thinking, these three practices serve to help the members of the church imagine a holistic purview of spiritual formation beyond a privatized, individualistic spirituality.

Over the course of the project, I have come to identify a number of fundamental modules within spiritual formation: awareness, participation, sustenance, and witness. What became apparent has been the commonality in the pattern between the general stages of spiritual formation and the implementation process of this project. In other words, this project has inadvertently identified and followed the stages of communal spiritual growth. This is positively distinct from simply planning spiritual practices for individuals to rehearse together in the church. Rather, corporate spiritual formation begins and ends with a social embodiment in its intention. These progressive stages of communal formation enhance the intentionality and make a clear pathway for transformation of the church. Therefore, the four modules of spiritual formation I explain hereafter reveals simultaneously the stages of corporate formation and the overview and outcome from the implementation of this doctoral project.

This project began with the statement that assumption of faith is the gravest mistake of the church today in the issue of spiritual growth. This is precisely because assumption denies any effort for awareness. Thus, the first step in initiating communal formation has been to foster awareness. Since this project only serves as an inception of corporate spiritual formation, it has devoted a significant portion of its content on creating awareness through learning sessions and initial trials of the three practices.

Awareness for spiritual formation has been twofold. First is an awareness of reality. Spiritual formation begins with one's awareness of depravity, a sense of failure, a lack of meaning in life, or a stagnant growth in faith. In the same way, communal formation begins by helping the participants become aware of individual and corporate needs, issues, and spiritual maturity. Incidentally, this project was begotten from the awareness of certain issues at Lifelight. Without the awareness, people are blind to the reality, in delusion, and ignorant to a path forward, or a change. For this reason, the project began first by helping the participants to gauge their spiritual maturity to create a desire for spiritual growth, a path forward to a with-God life that would ignite and inspire spiritual sensitivity and growth. General feedback showed ecstatic desire to know about the journey of faith and one's own stage of growth, as well as an awesome desire to participate in spiritual formation in order to grow together as a community. An initial experience at Open Table revealed to many members that they do not really know each other very well and that they needed to deepen their relationships.

Once the reality has been revealed and a desire for growth is kindled, it is important then to know how spirituality works, individually and communally. In this project, I have proposed that it begins by noticing and responding to the risen Christ. For this reason, the first and most consistent practice has been meditative prayer. All members of the church recognize clearly now that spiritual formation happens only in, through, and by the presence of God. I have also provided principles of spiritual formation and of its three practices to not only frame and contain the essence of practices but also to provide an awareness of how this formation happens, what members need to do, and why. Particularly important to this project was helping the congregation see

spiritual formation as a communal endeavor that spans over all of Christian life. Such an expansive endeavor of spiritual formation necessitated the inclusion of the practice of encouragement and fivefold gifting to develop and sustain a communal life consistent with the missional nature of the church. It also aids the understanding of what is needed for formation - community, sustenance, commitment to others, openness to share, and mutual striving for missional living. The feedback that has been received so far indicates that it is still unclear for many how the growth to maturity, specifically the change in one's direction of heart, happens. To remedy this, I intend to provide more insight into the process of habituation: liturgies, de-formative habits, habit-forming practices, and recalibrating desires during the broadened introduction of coaching this summer.

The second step in communal formation is participation. Naturally, spiritual formation is never without spiritual practice. Thus far, all members have been participating actively in various forms of meditative prayer. Meditative prayer has been crucial to forming a right posture for other spiritual practices. It has become naturally weaved into the ongoing community life and has begun to create a culture that constantly opens to means of grace. Moreover, deeply engaging in the Lord's table, meditative reading, and ancient prayers have created and affirmed the liturgy in worship to shape the imagination of with-God life for the congregation.

Another module in spiritual formation and the third step in communal formation is a practical structure for the sustenance of the ministry. This is not unlike how God established Levitical rituals and laws for the Israelites to sustain their relational identity with God. Within the scope of this project, I have suggested peer coaching as a viable method for encouragement among the members to engage in ongoing conversations

about faith and life, learn to lean on the Spirit's guidance, and enrich relationships. I have selected a few leaders whom I began to coach, prior to their becoming coaches to other members in the community. Their positive feedback uncovered the significance of this practice for sustaining the desire and intention for growth. While their coaching relationships with me have been a positive experience, the leaders shared some difficulties of being coaches. The general recommendation has been to allow sufficient amount of time for coaches to deepen relationships with the coached prior to learning and engaging in coaching questions. Thus, the church will provide greater support and training for coaching to these leaders. For now, it remains to be seen how long it will take for the web of coaching to include all members.

Lastly, awareness, participation, and sustenance must have a relentless aim to witness the kingdom of God. Without a proper, focused end in mind, the ministry can easily become programmatic, temporary, or simply a short-lived thrill. The ultimate purpose for communal formation is God's mission. In the theological investigation of this project, I have identified the mission of God to be twofold: centrifugal and centripetal pursuits. This project has focused on the centripetal aspect of the mission, that is, the work of building up the body of Christ to be a public witness to the kingdom. I have suggested fivefold gifting as the way that God has intended for the inward mission of the church. Through introducing fivefold gifting and the monthly activity of Open Table, I hope to invite members of the church to participate in equipping each other simply by realizing their gift, trusting their calling, and being affirmed by the community of the gift that the Spirit bestowed on individuals for the sake of the community. This is key to establishing the principle of the priesthood of all believers by insisting on mutual

participation in the mission of God on everyone. Ultimately, corporate spiritual formation is the church's inward participation in the Spirit's work for and within the church to reflect its missional identity outwardly through reconciliation and love amongst the people. The eventual outcome through this ministry initiative is to fulfill the missional call of the church to be a body of Christ that is a witness to the kingdom of God in its internal life together.

In that regard, Lifelight has barely begun its communal formation. While a complete assessment of the project is planned for later next year, as I have been leading and mutually participating in practices over the past two years, it appears that the goals of the ministry initiative are on their way to being met, albeit far from easily recognizable individual and communal transformation. My hope, for now, is to see a growing focus and sustained intention for growth. Lifelight will continue to engage further in its awareness, participation, and sustenance of formation and to strive to witness the kingdom through its life together. The process of communal formation is not linear but cyclical. Thus, the four modules are constantly occurring and reoccurring simultaneously. A continual development of awareness for Lifelight in the future will mean a wider understanding of spiritual formation, deeper awareness of self - primary passion (enneagram) and brokenness (dark night of the soul) - and a clearer conception of the process of formation (liturgies and habits). Corresponding to this awareness, Lifelight will participate in the daily discipline of practicing the presence (spiritual disciplines) and integrating confession and prayer of submission into weekly gatherings. Eventually, I hope to see the overhauling of the church's organizational structure and leadership to support the ongoing formation: a shift from issuing ministerial licenses and assigning

board membership, to a fluid leadership characterized by communal affirmation of fivefold gifting of members to actively and constantly help equip others, a decision-making process resembling a town-hall meeting that gives everyone a voice and a chance to unify in the Spirit, and a financial restructure by shifting from a skewed cost of maintenance to a shared purse for the work of justice and mercy.

There is a desperate need for the church in North America to recalibrate its telos from collecting people to growing people spiritually. Many churches have been widely missing the purpose of being first and foremost about the growth of their people toward a spiritual and, essentially, a relational maturity that enables people to realize and properly practice spiritual formation as a community. This failure has persisted due to a shortage of resources for corporate spiritual formation that embodies the call of the church to build up the body of Christ. I am excited about the potential of this ministry initiative making an impact not only within Lifelight but also having broader implications for the Church universal. While I admit that the holistic communal formation that I presented in this project is likely to be viewed as idealistic, albeit desired by many, my optimism for Lifelight comes from our openness to the changes which have been ingrained in the church since its inception. We are also humble, small, and easily maneuverable, similar to the composition of the early church. Together as a community of believers, Lifelight will endeavor to embrace its communal formation with the hope to revitalize its spiritual life and be put on the path to becoming a true body of Christ that witnesses to the kingdom of God in San Francisco. With God's help, this hopeful imagination can become a new reality for Lifelight.

APPENDIX A

A Guideline for the Practice of Encouragement (Coaching)

Why the practice of encouragement?

A practice of encouragement is crucial for binding and sustaining our intention for growth and continuing our active engagement in spiritual practice. It also ensures that no one gets left behind just going through the motion of spiritual practice and neglecting growth. This is how a covenant community must live: encouraging one another, partnering in new habits and rhythm of life, and keeping each other accountable.

How do we engage in the practice of encouragement?

We commit to an ongoing conversation for encouragement with one another that extends to all facets of life. To do this, we will use a method of peer coaching.

What is peer coaching?

Peer coaching is a simple, relational approach to encourage spiritual development in a way that corresponds to empowerment of and dependency on the Holy Spirit. To put it simply, peer coaching is intentionally meeting with another person in the community and asking questions about spiritual growth. Coaching is not about having all the right answers or holding a position of authority. Rather, a coach is simply a guide to help the coached engage in deeper thinking, be goal oriented, and reach their potential, all by being attentive and submissive to the Spirit. In fact, a coach will not tell you anything. They simply help you make your own decisions by helping you to focus, process, and sort out options to figure out issues of faith and life by listening to the Holy Spirit.

What are the important things I need to keep in mind?

1. Coaching is not just a human activity but an activity of God. A coach does not depend on his/her own knowledge and experience but rather the wisdom, thought process, and work of the Holy Spirit. The practice of encouragement is about both the coach and the coached being attentive and submissive to the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. Coaching is about deepening relationships. In this practice, you will engage in deep, intentional conversations that reveal yourself in a vulnerable way, specifically about your desires and struggles. The focus here is about you and the coach spending time in dialogue to deepen the relationship.
3. All of us can both be a coach and be coached. As you engage in this practice, you and the coach will know when you are ready to coach others, too. You may be more ready and capable to coach than you think.

What should I expect then?

First, you will meet and spend time with the coach to get to know each other more. Once you have developed a trusting relationship, your conversation will focus on your spiritual growth and sorting out the issues in life. The coach will help you clarify the issues and discover what is really going on deep inside by asking questions and helping you unpack. But, remember, the coach will not tell you what to do or give you advice. The coach will wait for you to discover the solution on your own.

Who are the coaches?

It started with Dan Chung. He has already begun coaching a few people. While being coached, they also learned how to coach just as you will. They will coach some of you. And all of you will eventually coach others. And we will all be connected in a web of coaching.

APPENDIX B

Description of Fivefold Gifting

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11-13

Apostles

- Apostles strengthen the local church by calling its people to live in the kingdom.
- Apostles by nature look outward and call their communities to move beyond their local setting and provide coordinated ministry between multiple churches to unite together for the mission.
- Apostles extend the Gospel into new areas by developing justice ministry, compassion ministry, prison ministry, homeless shelter, or serving neighborhoods with environmental awareness.

Prophets

- Prophets call the church to maintain faithfulness to God as guardians of the covenant relationship.
- Prophets by nature have a deep-seated, covenantal love for God’s people that allows them to firmly but gently speak for the hopes of transformation and lead people to the ever-renewing encounter with God.
- Prophets discern the spiritual realities in a given situation, question the current social, political, or theological issues, and speak into the mission community in a timely and appropriate way to adapt and respond to its environment.

Evangelists

- Evangelists communicate the Gospel in such a way that people respond in faith and obedience.
- Evangelists by nature find great satisfaction in helping someone move closer to Jesus, no matter what phase of the journey the person is in.
- Unlike commonly held false view, evangelists do not seek an instant moment of conversion, nor make a persuasive and compelling presentation of the Gospel.
- Evangelists bring the redemptive message of the Gospel to those who are hurting and invite them to the redeemed community of God.

Pastors

- Pastors create a healthy community by nurturing people in the faith and caring for the welfare of the people.
- Pastors are liaisons for redeeming work of the Spirit, bridging between the Spirit and the people.
- Pastors help create the church to become a redeemed community to witness to the world the Redeemer who is Lord and Savior.

Teachers

- Teachers are effective trainers, philosophers, thinkers, and inspirers of learning who understand ideas and how they shape human life.
- Teachers mediate the revealed wisdom of God, help explain the biblical worldview for the church, and deepen people's faith.
- Teachers teach not only ideas (idealism) but also through ideas in action (ethos), that is, faith lived out in obedience.

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